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40  
GREATS

40 GREATS BY 40  
MODERN MASTERS

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## FIRST BLOOD

**EARTHLINGS:** THIS ISSUE WE PRESENT TO YOU A COMPLETE TATTOO OVERLOAD AS WE GET INTO THE FABULOUS TATTOO ART OF **XOIL**. WE ALSO BRING YOU MORE TEMPTATION IN THE SHAPE OF THE MAGNIFICENT **MxM** AND **JASON STEPHAN**. A REAL LIFE HOLY TRINITY!

**LEMMY ANYBODY?** YEP, WE TALK EXCLUSIVELY WITH **MOTORHEAD'S** MAINMAN AND THEN GOT QUICK 'N' PAINFUL AT **JOE CAPOBIANCO'S** HOPE GALLERY.

LATER, WE WRAPPED UP NICE AND WARM FOR **TATTOO FREEZE**, SWEEP ACROSS THE ATLANTIC FOR **AM-JAM** AND FINISHED UP CHECKING OUT THE 3D ART OF **JASON FRIELING**.

AND IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR, THERE'S **MORE, MORE, MORE...**

ISSUE 209 • APRIL 2012 • £4.25



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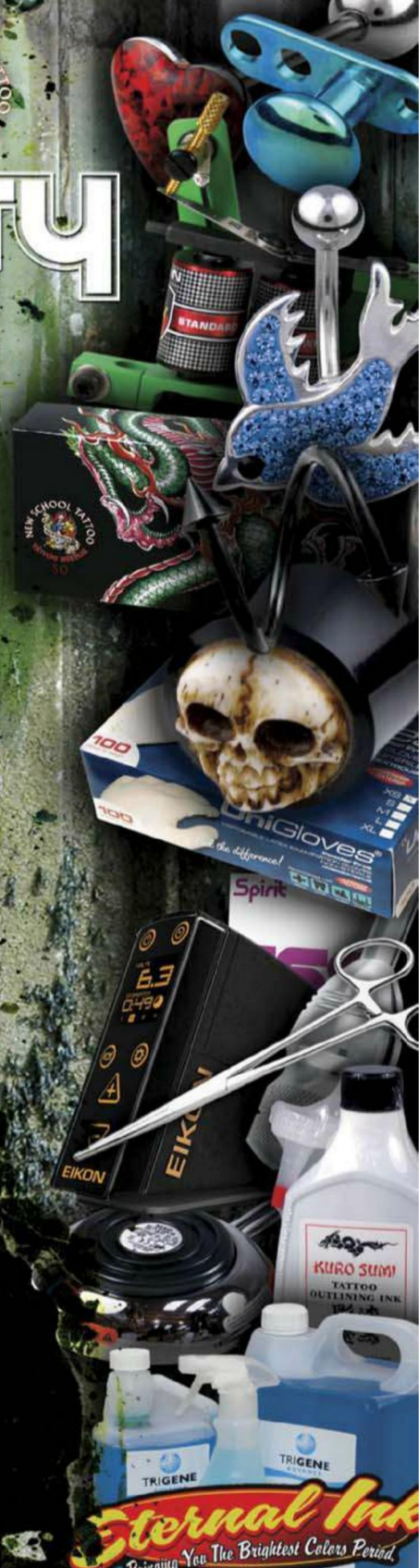
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# The needle has landed

**A**bout three months back, I left Facebook. Left it forever both professionally and personally – it's an insane place to be at the best of times. What began many years ago for most of us as a place to keep in touch with old friends we had long since moved away from (and let's be honest here, we only did that to make sure they weren't getting on any better in life than we were), has turned into the world's biggest party... and I'm not even in the kitchen.

On the plus side, I have reclaimed an estimated whole day of my life back. On the downside, nobody wishes me good morning anymore, nobody is LTFAO at something mildly humorous that I stole from somebody else to post, and nobody is updating me on what they had for breakfast or how shit their car is today...

Worse still, I have gone from thousands of friends to just three who – as luck would have it – I knew before Facebook launched

and are still around. When I first announced I was going to leave, one of my FB friends asked me not to because it was "handy to know what I was doing without having to speak to me".

Thanks. That made me feel really wholesome and warm inside.

The really scary thing however – especially for those of you who have the hub welded to your souls – is that I reckon 98 percent

this. It's not your special space. It's the world's special place. At the stroke of a button, they can be away from your lifes-work and milking pigs at Farmville. It's rather like going out for a drink with somebody who insists on messaging their other friends while they're sitting next to you.

Step back for a second and take a look at the screen you're locked into. Seen how many

your business in a digital hostel? Social networking will die in the next three years – be ready. A party with that many millions of guests can only end with somebody being sick in the garden.

I know this because I checked in on MySpace on the way out of the door. But none of that is an excuse not to like us on Facebook all the same ;)

*Sen*

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO SAY SOMETHING IN 140 CHARACTERS WHEN I CAN'T EVEN MAKE A DECENT POINT IN LESS THAN 1,400 WORDS? I DON'T THINK SO

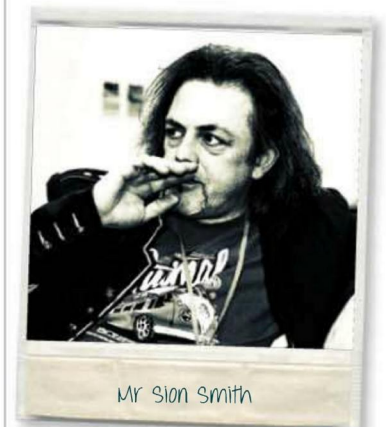
of my 'friends' still haven't noticed I'm not there anymore.

You know it's time to move on when the huge companies move in and start asking you to hook up with them via their TV adverts. What was once a cool place to hang out and see some funny pics from days gone by has become big business. For those of you who use Facebook as your only source of PR and business, I would suggest you think carefully about

subliminal messages are loaded up on the page that will take your digi-pals elsewhere?

... and twitter? I'm a writer. How am I supposed to say something in 140 characters when I can't even make a decent point in less than 1,400 words? I don't think so. If you've got nothing to say, why not shut the hell up?

Surely having your own online house is the way to go? Do you really want to live and conduct all



Mr Slon Smith

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## THE USUAL SUSPECTS

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News, views, moves and blues... well, actually not so much of the blues.

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A round-up of the pick of the conventions looming ahead.

**10 WALK THIS WAY**  
You just can't keep Mike DeVries away from pumping out these quality books.

**12 THE SWEENEY**  
Aww. With Mr Smallman busier than a whole bunch of bees, please welcome Mr Paul Sweeney. It's gonna be a blast...

**14 FIRST BLOOD**  
We know that for some of you, it's probably your first time in the arena. Thus we present the first in a series of short, but important guides to get you started.

**05 LETTERS**  
Speaks for itself really.

**07 REVIEWS**  
As does this... unless you were expecting something else.

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## GRACE

A STORY FROM YE OLDE CITY OF LONDON.

## ARTIST PROFILES

**32 XOIL**  
Love it or not, the art of Xoil is undeniably staring over the ledge. We wouldn't have it any other way.

**60 JASON STEPHAN**  
Another bullet from the gun at Loose Screw... those guys sure know talent when they see it!

**70 MXM**  
Beautiful, well thought-out art with meaning... one day, every tattoo artist will be like this.



## SPECIAL FEATURES

**24 JASON FRIELING**  
3D art anybody? Oh yeah – Mr Frieling has got some serious moves going on...

**66 QUICK 'N' PAINFUL**  
Just what it says on the tin.

**90 AM-JAM**  
Another cold one, another fun one just 3,000 miles away...

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## TATTOO FREEZE

IT COULD HAVE BEEN COLDER... BUT MORE FUN? PROBABLY NOT.



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# Sleeve Notes

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ALL SUBMISSIONS TO SLEEVE NOTES GRATEFULLY RECEIVED. BE IT NEWS, AN EVENT, NEW MERCH. A STUDIO MOVE... WE'LL DO OUR VERY BEST TO LET EVERYBODY ELSE KNOW ABOUT IT TOO. EMAIL: [EDITOR@SKINDEEP.CO.UK](mailto:EDITOR@SKINDEEP.CO.UK) OR IF YOU WANT TO BE ARCHAIC ABOUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR: SKIN DEEP, THE OLD SCHOOL, HIGHER KINNERTON, CHESTER CH4 9AJ. BRING IT.



## BOTTLED ART

These visually stunning bottle designs have been inspired by LA-based fashion designer, Christian Audigier's mix of rock 'n' roll street style combined with complex images of 'Old School' tattoo art, as used on his Ed Hardy brand products. Fast becoming a collectible series, the bottles are proving to be extremely popular in the gift market as well as in licensed outlets due to their very unique selling point.

You can see, try and buy from the range at the Peterlee Tattoo Arts Festival, 25 March 2012, and the North Lakes International Tattoo Convention, Carlisle, 14-15 April 2012 (tickets available for both now). They are also available direct to individuals as well as trade customers by emailing: [wines@cooperwhite.co.uk](mailto:wines@cooperwhite.co.uk), or through the website at [www.cooperwhite.co.uk](http://www.cooperwhite.co.uk).

## SHORT SLEEVES



## A MOVER!

Craig Wilson has decided to move to pastures new in 2012 and will now be tattooing out of Wilde Ink – 8 Silver Street, Wakefield, WF1 1YU. Telephone: 01924 298185.

Craig has made a name for himself in the north of England with his vibrant and original tattooing style – and very big personality. He will now be filling Wakefield and surrounding areas with his bright, vibrant tattoos, working alongside some other great tattoo artists. Already his appointment books are filling up fast, so if you want to get some work done, grab the man soon. He will also be working Liverpool and is planning a guest spot at Awake Arise at some point this year.

## SIN AFTER SIN

The competitions keep on coming! This issue, we've got some cool T-shirts to give away from SINSTAR clothing. You know the rules – send an email to: [editor@skindeep.co.uk](mailto:editor@skindeep.co.uk) with the subject line of SINSTAR and we'll pick some lucky winners out of the proverbial hat. On the other hand, if you're perpetually unlucky in life and want to get your hands on one, head over to [www.sinstarclothing.com](http://www.sinstarclothing.com) where they already have some sweet, sweet deals on the table.





## SHORT SLEEVES

## DAYLIGHT ROBBERY

This in from Mike at Spike at the Art:

"Someone broke into my van at the Brighton show this year. I'm hoping that someone may be able to shed some light on the theft. The van was broken into and the value of the goods and the cost of the damage for the repairs to the van have ran over £1,000; the bit that hurts the most is the fact that the van was parked in the secure artist/ trader car park.

A laptop and camera were taken, both of which have personal things on them as well as work. If anyone reading this knows anything about it or can help us find the person who did it, please get in touch at: [spikeattheart@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:spikeattheart@hotmail.co.uk) or phone 01752 340070. Discretion is assured. We would also like to thank Woody and the crew of the show for their understanding and support.

## LAST MINUTE VACANCIES

Doc Black Ink are looking for an outstanding artist to occupy a chair at our brand new Tattoo & Piercing Studio in Gateshead, Tyne & Wear. This will be a prime earning opportunity for the successful applicant, as the studio is located in the Metrocentre - Europe's largest shopping & leisure centre. We offer flexible hours, creative freedom and an air conditioned studio equipped with all the latest equipment. A minimum of 3 years studio experience and an excellent portfolio are essential. A loyal customer base is desirable. Applicants must be confident, have a positive attitude, be reliable, self-motivated and willing to work to the highest standards in the industry. Please email your CV and portfolio to [enquiries@docblackink.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@docblackink.co.uk) for consideration.

## JEKYLL &amp; HYDE

Jekyll & Hyde Tattoo Co is the newest and biggest tattoo studio in Rugby, Warwickshire. Due to our success since we opened in July 2011 we are now taking on two more tattoo artists and also have the space for regular guest artists. We have a strong client base and a very good all round reputation. All applicants must have a solid portfolio and have a high standard of hygiene and excellent work ethics. Please forward links to portfolios to: [jekyll\\_hyde\\_tattoo@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jekyll_hyde_tattoo@hotmail.co.uk).

## RANDOM READER

## PHOTO OF THE MONTH

I am a 24-year-old French man with a passion for photography. I recently created a social network page to display my pictures. After taking some photographs at the 2010 Liverpool Tattoo Convention and Tattoo Jam 2011, I simply decided that people generally don't bite and I started asking random inked people I met if they were OK to model for me. I only do black and white as I started photography when digital was only a dream; I remember those long hours in dark rooms waiting for the chemicals to work their magic on the photosensitive paper! This shoot took place in Wakefield with Matt. I randomly met him in the shop where he works and liked his ink. I asked if he was OK to meet so I could take some photographs of him. After a few delays we finally met in a pool bar, and the rest, well, here's the result.

I can be contacted at: [b.and.w.memories@gmail.com](mailto:b.and.w.memories@gmail.com) if people would like me to take some pictures of them. V.



## MODEL BEHAVIOUR

After a few enquiries from readers regarding the front cover of Skin Shots 79, the model is wearing a top by a company called Studded Heart. This image is by tattooist, James Robinson, and printed by Sacred Stitches - check them out for yourselves here: [www.sacredstitches.co.uk](http://www.sacredstitches.co.uk). Job done

## ... AND FINALLY

From Ant at K2 Bodyart in Beverly:

"Last March, I went into hospital for major surgery to cut out some of my esophagus and the top quarter of my stomach due to cancer. When I eventually got out after a six-week battle for my life and four stone lighter, I was off work for four months, and could only manage a few days a week when I went back (37 inches of stitches and a missing rib didn't help). This financially knocked me back as I had just opened a shop in Beverly three weeks beforehand. I would like to publicly say thanks to Chris and Colleen from K2 Richmond for coming to my studio and keeping it open until I returned. Now, I hope to catch up on my bills and mortgage, other finances and come back to the convention scene for the Manchester show in August and Tattoo Jam - though I think to be honest it will take me another year to be fully healed after such an intensive and mind-bending operation."

Mr Ant... we salute you!



HIT THE ROAD JACK

# THE CALL OF THE WILD



## THE GREAT BRITISH TATTOO SHOW

### 21-22 APRIL, OLYMPIA, LONDON

**SO WHEN IS IT?** It's on 21-22 April. Thanks for asking.

**AT LEAST IT WON'T BE SNOWING. WHERE MIGHT THAT BE?**

The Olympia in London, which is certainly big enough to hold all of your questions... any more?

**OF COURSE. ASIDE FROM THE OBVIOUS, WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?** Good question. To make it a little different from what you'd normally expect, the show is being sliced up into three zones – traditional, contemporary and urban. If you can't fit yourself into one of those, you're in trouble! Each zone will feature a ton of lifestyle magic, and will include catwalks, graffiti, music, some nice awards and whole bunch of laughs.

**AND THE OBVIOUS?** The artist list is still being finalised, but if you keep checking back at [greatbritishtattooshow.com](http://greatbritishtattooshow.com) – where you can also buy tickets – you'll be kept up-to-date and can tell your mates all about it.

**CAN I GET IN FOR FREE?** No, but if you get yourself an advance ticket, you can have a free, limited edition T-shirt.

## NORTH LAKES TATTOO SHOW

### 14-15 APRIL, CUMBRIA



**AND THIS ONE IS ON...** 14-15 April – and before you ask, it's in Cumbria which is right at the top end of England and an absolute blast for Scots to invade if that's your cup of tea.

**WILL IT BE GREAT?** Sure. Two full days with the cream of the UK crop hanging around says so. Be on the look out for Bez, Martin Couley, JJ Jackson, John Anderton and Leah Moule, to name but a few... the artist list is long!

**CAN I GET IN FOR...** No. You can't get in free at this one either. For tickets and anything else you might need, just point and click some stuff towards [northlaketattooshow.co.uk](http://northlaketattooshow.co.uk) – everything you need is there.

## INK & IRON TATTOO CONVENTION

### 1 APRIL, BIRMINGHAM

**THE DATE PLEASE?** April 1.

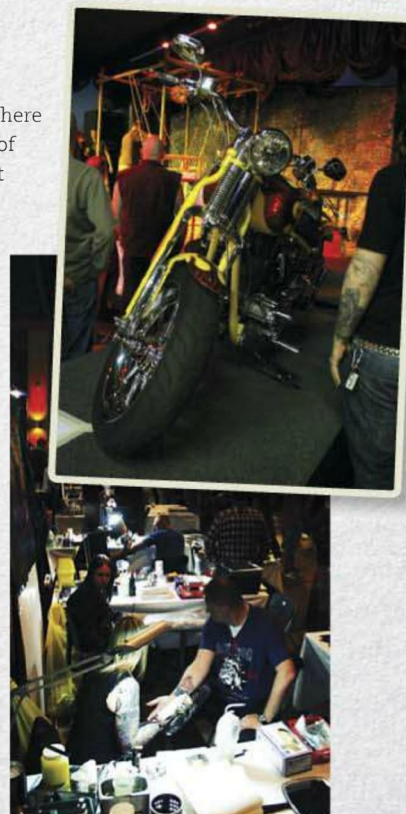
Put it in your diary.

**DO I HAVE TO GO FAR?** Depends where you live really, Birmingham is kind of in the middle of the country. It's not far from anywhere, so the answer to your question is, 'no, you don't'.

**GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON**

**TO GET OFF THE SOFA.** I can give you a few if you like. With 50 great tattooists working, chances are next time you're on your sofa, you'll have another tattoo. The choice is long and excellent, ranging from Goldilox and the guys at Skinny's Ink, to Max Pniewski from Southmead. Don't take my word for it though, check out the artist list at [inkniron.co.uk](http://inkniron.co.uk) and see for yourself. While you're there, you'll see that there're some cool bands playing, that old favourite called 'suspension', and some magic too.

**DERREN BROWN?** No, but close! Just get down there and check it out.





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# Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

**March 16-18**

## LADY LUCK TATTOO EXPO

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Nevada, USA  
[www.ladylucktattooexpo.com](http://www.ladylucktattooexpo.com)

**March 17-18**

## ESSEX TATTOO EXPO

Crown Plaza Resort, Maldon, Essex, England  
[www.essexattooexpo.co.uk](http://www.essexattooexpo.co.uk)

**March 25**

## 10TH PETERLEE TATTOO ARTS FESTIVAL

Peterlee Leisure Centre, Durham, England  
Contact Trudy @ Eddies Tattoo Studio  
0191 5871787  
[eddie@ehardiman.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:eddie@ehardiman.orangehome.co.uk)

**March 31-April 1**

## THE SCOTTISH TATTOO CONVENTION

The Corn Exchange, Edinburgh, Scotland  
[www.scottishtattooconvention.com](http://www.scottishtattooconvention.com)

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## INK & IRON TATTOO CONVENTION

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**April 13-15**

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The Abbey Hotel, Donegal Town, Ireland  
Info: Ruth or Liosa from Zombie Dolls Tattoo  
Parlour on 00353 74 9722440  
[northwesttattooshow@ireland.com](mailto:northwesttattooshow@ireland.com)

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WALK THIS WAY

# ANIMAL MAGIC



Around these parts, Mike DeVries is the undisputed master of realism, so it's always a real treat when he finds the time to publish another one of his masterful works on paper

This month sees the release of **Animal Ink: Exploring the World's Wildlife Through Tattoo Art**. It's available as a high-quality 11x8.5-inch hardcover book through Memento Publishing, and features the work of a serious all-star list of tattoo artists.

With 304 full-color pages, this knockout collection not only contains tattoo work from 160 talented tattoo artists, but also includes 62 stories about specific animal tattoos with details, meanings, and inspiration from the collectors who wear the ink, and the artists who inked them.

With animal designs appearing throughout history in all facets of the art world, it's no surprise that utilising animalistic beauty, strength, and grace has been a large focus within the genre of tattoo art. For those seeking animal tattoos, there is an endless array of styles, creativity and artists to choose from, and **Animal Ink** encompasses and celebrates these many different displays within its pages by featuring over 1,500 tattoos of creatures of the wild kingdom. You need this in your collection and you can order a copy directly from here: [mdtattoos.com/catalog](http://mdtattoos.com/catalog).





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# Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

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## BOURNEMOUTH TATTOO CONVENTION

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## KRAKOW TATTOOFEST

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June 9-10

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York Racecourse, York, England  
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October 12-14

## TATTOO JAM

Doncaster Racecourse  
[www.tattoojam.com](http://www.tattoojam.com)

PAUL SWEENEY

# WHAT'S LOVE GOT TATTOO WITH IT?



With Mr Smallman being busier than ever, it is with much sadness that we have had to part ways for the time being. We wish Jim only the very best in everything he does. He leaves behind a big hole, one that can only be filled by The Flying Squad. That's right... it's The Sweeney.

Before I get started, for those of you still brave enough to be reading beyond the obvious Tina Turner title wordplay, this might be an appropriate opportunity to take a minute and succumb to the overwhelming temptation to scream “WHAT’S LOVE GOT TATTOO, GOT TATTOO WITH IT!”

Come on, be honest, that did feel good! Don’t feel ashamed, I bet some of you even had yourselves a little Private Dance(r). Ok, I’m done now. No seriously, I’m Turner(ing) over a new leaf! Ok, ok I’m genuinely done now... I promise...

So, apart from being a catchy title for my very first column, and clearly encapsulating my newly found fondness for Tina Turner puns, what has love got tattoo with it? Sitting in the front room of my male-dominated South West London abode, the day after valentines day (LOVE or HATE, it affects us all), I can’t help but be distracted by the presence of a single red rose in a half full (optimist) pint glass (classy). I hasten to add, this isn’t my rose, this anonymous offering is sadly not from one of my admirers, or even more believably, my Mum. Regardless, I still recognise this solitary rose as a thing of beauty, but it won’t last forever.

So if you really like someone, get tattooed you pussy! Obviously, if you’re not at 18 notches on the old life post yet, stick to flowers and chocolates for now. And

whatever you do, no matter how much you love them, never – NEVER – get your first, second, or for that matter, any girlfriend/boyfriend name tattooed anywhere on your body. EVER! The only exception to this rule is if it’s the 1940s, you’re going off to fight the Nazis in WWII (yep, I mentioned the war and Nazis in my first/ maybe last article) and you’re not sure if you’ll return.

You’ve not known the woman you’re in love with for long enough to propose, but you promise when you return a hero you will make an honest woman of her. As a symbol of your undying love, you have her first name tattooed upon the left side of your chest, as an eternal reminder that your heart will always belong to her. But, it’s not the 1940s anymore. So unless you build a time machine, travel back in time, fall in love with a woman who could be your grandma, timing your call to arms conveniently before you get to know your lover well enough to propose, and then risk your life in a war you already know the result of... I guess it’s never going to happen?

Plus, it’s lot of effort just for a tattoo.



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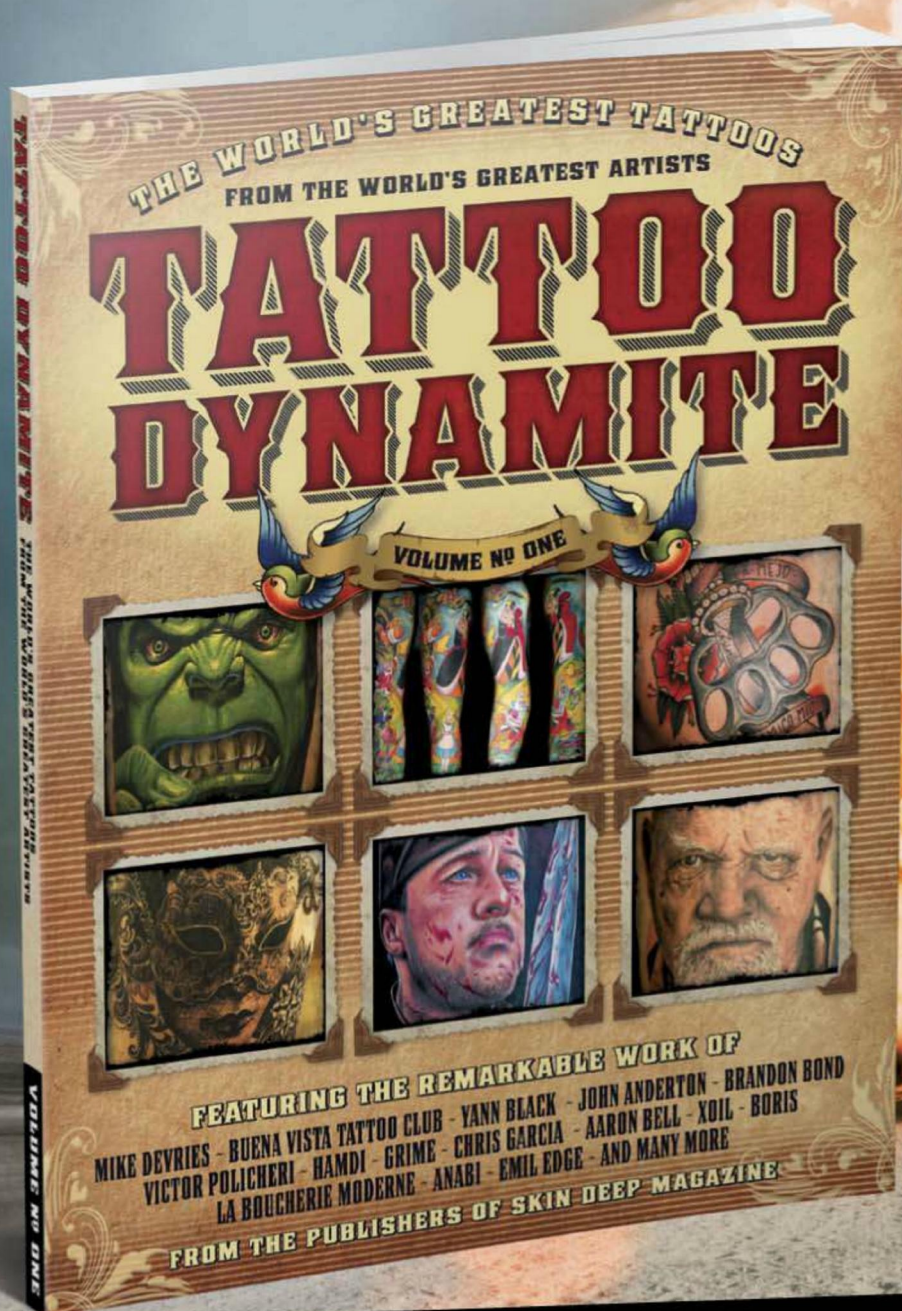
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## THE STRONG ARM OF THE LAW

Despite it being written in stone for all to see, there occasionally appears to be some confusion regarding the age you are legally allowed to get tattooed – we've seen it with our own eyes on various studio websites, and in an age of hyper-information, that is pretty irresponsible.

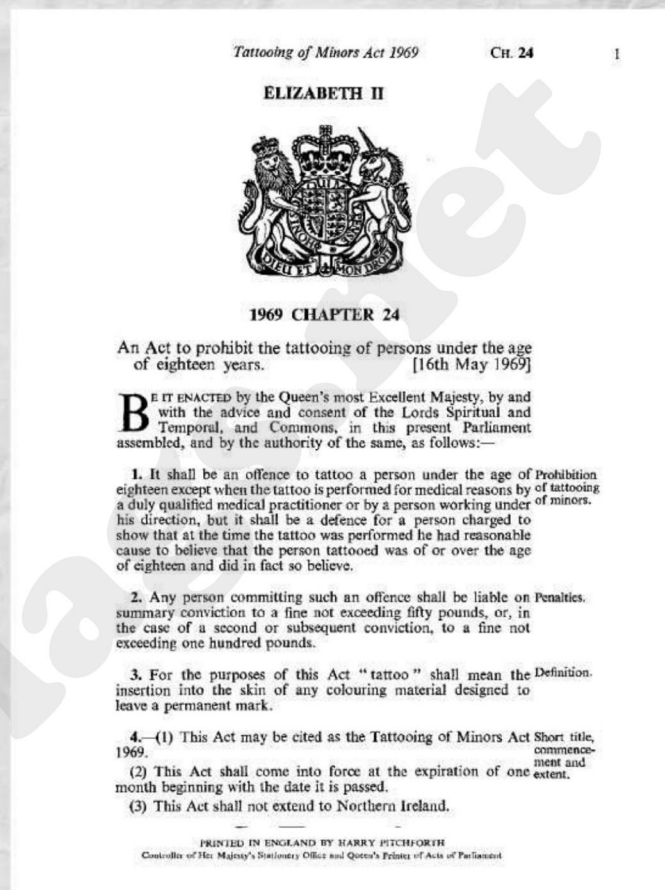
Here's the deal: in the United Kingdom (if you were off school that day, that means England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), the rules are the same. You must be 18. End of story.

There is no 'parental consent' get out clause, so there's no point in dragging your folks down there having pestered them for months on end. The penalties for breaking this law are fines for the tattooist, but any reputable and decent studio will know this already and will show you the door before the conversation even begins.

There is a caveat to this law: you can be tattooed for medical reasons and under the direction of the medical profession. Some research reveals those reasons to be as follows:



Dominka Cardocka, Skorpion Sosnowiec, Poland



1. As a warning that a patient suffers from a chronic disease that can exacerbate suddenly and that will require immediate specialist treatment. One example is in the case of congenital adrenal hyperplasia, in which patients may need steroid replacement therapy during ordinary illness.

2. As an aid in radiotherapy. In order to minimize damage to surrounding tissues, the radiotherapist seeks to keep the irradiated field as small as possible. Marking a number of points on the body with tattoos can aid radiotherapists in adjusting the beam properly.

3. During breast reconstruction after mastectomy (removal of the breast for treatment of cancer), or breast reduction surgery. Tattooing is sometimes used to replace the areola which has been removed during mastectomy, or to fill in areas of pigment loss which may occur during breast reduction performed with a free nipple graft technique.

We sincerely hope you never have to consider these three points ever again, but that's the law in a nutshell. If you want to be a responsible collector – one that is respected and admired by others – just stick to the rules. Easy. 🍌



# HEAL IT FAST

There are many trains of thought when it comes to healing. Up front, we will state quite rightly, that you should follow your tattooist's advice to the letter. Not only do they know what they are doing, but if you have any cause to go back with a query, you won't have to enter into the conversation about how you made your own healing process up as you went along.

It's always worth re-stating the basics though.

For a tattoo to heal properly will take some participation on your part. To heal properly, the tattoo – as any wound (which is broken skin) – needs to be able to breathe. This means removing the covering your tattooist has put on and getting some fresh air on your skin.

Keep it clean by gently showering it – water by itself is fine, or a gentle anti-bacterial soap can be used as well, but never soak it in water for anything that might be termed as a long period – and no swimming! Once it's showered off, dab it gently with a towel and cream it up as directed to keep it moist.

There should be just enough ointment on there to keep it from scabbing. Your body will warm up any cream and liquefy it further – so if you find it gets runny, you've probably put a little too much on, but that's easily rectified by dabbing it off with a paper towel.


There is a train of thought that you should simply leave it to heal by itself without the assistance of any creams, but the itching may well drive you to distraction, so it's not heartily recommended by anybody.

There are many creams on the market – and as stated above, you should use whatever your tattooist recommends to you, but popular brands include

Bepanthen (the well-known nappy rash cream), Tattoo Goo, Aquaphor, and one of the new kids on the block, MOA – the green balm, which has been reported to have an increased healing time over all others. We're currently road-testing MOA here to see what it has to offer and we'll make some comparisons in a later issue.

As with all things that involve humans, some heal faster than others, but generally speaking, you're looking at anything from ten days to two weeks before you can consider it healed properly.

Finally... when it comes to tattoos, whether it's your first or 20th, just remember that the sun (big ball of fire in the sky, you can't miss it) is not your best friend when you're healing up. If you can't help yourself, cover up with clothes not sunscreen/ block.

Aftercare is a tricky business indeed, but over time, you will learn to know thyself... 



Eva Huber, Horseshoes and Hand Grenades, MA

**REMEMBER THAT THE SUN (BIG BALL OF FIRE IN THE SKY, YOU CAN'T MISS IT) IS NOT YOUR BEST FRIEND WHEN YOU'RE HEALING UP**



Julie Clarke, Flaming Gun



Jake X

**NEXT ISSUE WE LOOK AT**

**CUSTOM VS FLASH & COVER UPS**



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# The Existentialist

Some years ago, as her mum painted in her studio, a young Grace perused the shelves, thumbing through books on tribal culture, scarification and tattoos

When Grace started getting tattoos, her mum didn't have a problem with it, it was more with the body-modifications, but Grace lovingly reflects that her mum only has herself to blame for having those books on her shelves. Her father however, wasn't so keen on tattooing. Despite being a captain in the Navy and seeing it on an everyday basis, his view was that only sailors and prostitutes had them. He could never really get his head around his own daughter being tattooed.

"I loved primary school, it was amazing. It was so fucking fun. All we did was our lessons, but I don't really remember those, I just remember playtime. My friends and I would play 'Animal King'. One day we'd be a family of hawks, another day something else. But then secondary school happened and that just sucked."

Grace was already very into scarification at that point and remembers doing her GCSE art project on it. Her teacher found it interesting, but nobody in school seemed to get her. She'd wear her hair weird, but not in a stereotypically weird way. "I don't know... everyone is confused at that age. I'm not sure I ever really got what I was about, and I'm not sure if I even do now. But I do remember everyone being particularly confused by me."

After her GCSE's she left school and went to art college in Plymouth where she studied both photography and fine art. She loved it, and subsequently moved to Bristol where she stayed for



I FELT LIKE MY LIFE HAD REALLY STARTED AND I WAS BEGINNING TO GET MORE AND MORE TATTOOS FROM DIFFERENT ARTISTS. THAT WAS WHEN I GOT MY BACK PIECE DONE.

two years before moving to London, getting a job in a tattoo shop. "That was it, I felt like I was home. I felt like my life had really started and I was beginning to get more and more tattoos from different artists. That was when I got my back piece done."

Googling Grace and looking at images, the one tattoo that for me stands out the most is the swan that covers nearly all of her back, its wings reaching all the way around her ribcage and onto her legs. Piotrek Taton, who then worked at Good Times Studio, was the tattoo artist behind the black and grey swan.

"I was really nervous before going down there. At that point I hadn't had anything done on my torso or my chest, but I'd experienced painful areas on my arms and legs. All tattooing is painful to a certain degree, but I was really excited about it, and everyone was really lovely when I got there. Mentally, I think I was a bit unprepared though, I didn't really think it would be as bad as it was, but I knuckled down and since then I've made certain to prepare myself mentally."

He's done a few of my tattoos now, the portrait of Coco Rosie on my leg is done by him too, and the Manson portrait is done by the brilliant Joao Bosco of The Family Business. There's something about all the polish artists I've seen (referring to Piotrek), they do that really great dark and twisted realism. Piotrek's blends are amazing, almost like silk. I wanted the swan to be at that moment in time where it's about to charge through the water, 🦢



just as they're lifting their wings up. Just before they go mental!"

Grace told me how she experiences a lot of frustration from people when they discover that there are long waiting lists involved with certain tattoo artists. "Time is not an object that needs to be an issue though. I had to wait around six months for the back-piece, but I'll live with it for the rest of my life; I would have waited ten years if I'd had to."

When Grace first moved to London she experienced a real education in tattooing. She worked at Self Sacrifice first, and felt that was when she was first properly exposed to what tattooing really was. Up until that point she had never really hung out with tattooed



MENTALLY, I THINK I WAS A BIT UNPREPARED THOUGH, I DIDN'T REALLY THINK IT WOULD BE AS BAD AS IT WAS, BUT I KNUCKLED DOWN AND SINCE THEN I'VE MADE CERTAIN TO PREPARE MYSELF MENTALLY

tattoos done well. "Either it can look really amazing, or generic and overdone." Living in London and using the tube all the time, she finds herself like a lot of people staring at her feet, her hands. And so she's covered them with the names of people close to her.

"They may not be the best in the world, but each has a really awesome memory. I've got girls names on one hand and boys names on the other. I have an F

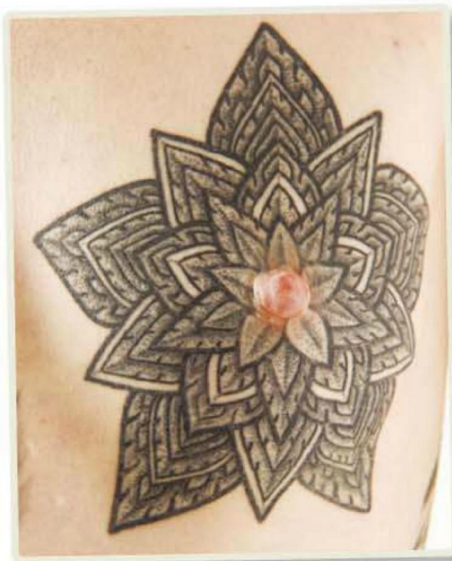
on my hand for one of my best friends, Francisco, who works at The Family Business. My friend, Gary, tattooed Venus and Mars symbols on my fingers, and Tamara blacked out my thumb.

I've got my mum and sister on my wrists, a little fly on my knuckle when I first got tattooed at Red Inc. I've never viewed those guys as workmates, they're my family. I'm really lucky to have such an awesome job, and that fly, my little love-bug, is awesome."

Having worked in a bookshop I often keep an eye out for new tattoo books, but generally find the majority of them overdone and poorly conceived. That was until I discovered Alex MacNaughton's 'London Tattoos' for which Grace adorns the cover.

"I was working at Pure Ink at the time. Alex, who did the book, basically printed out these fliers as an advert for tattooed people. There were some in the shop

and I picked one up, did some research on Alex and saw that he'd done other books; I sent him an email and that was that. There were lovely people at the studio where they did the photographs, just a really great atmosphere. At the end the make-up lady told me they wanted to put me on the cover and I thought she was kidding! Anyway, it's made my mum proud and it's really well



people so felt a little bit like the token tattooed girl, but now that is different. After a year-and-a-half there, she moved onto Pure Ink which sadly shut down, and now she is at Red Inc in Luton, but still lives in London. "There's four tattoo artists at Red Inc: Sam, Mark, Ricky and Kieran, then there's Tom and I who do the piercing." Grace also tattoos using the traditional practice of hand-poking. "I basically use something like a chopstick. I've always loved dot-work. My housemate and best friend, Tamara, is a dot-work tattoo artist and she's always really inspired me. We got really into drawing symmetrical tattoos together and got really into it." Grace shows me her fingers, "I've got her name on here. I've got lots of my friends names on my fingers."

Grace doesn't have a lot of text tattooed on her, apart from mostly on her hands, but she's very keen on text





put together and edited. It was nice that the book focused more on the person than the tattoos. It was more personal. I don't really drink much, but I remember having a Sailor Jerry at the launch party and being a bit tipsy on the tube home."

Along with her friend Tamara, Grace was recently suspended at Divine Canvas by Iestyn Flye, the resident body modification artist. When they arrived they flipped a coin to see who would go first, and the first suspension went to Tamara. "Watching one of your best friends being suspended is one of the most amazing things I've ever experienced. Just being part of the process. When she was being suspended I was swinging her legs, and then when I went up, Tamara held onto my hands the whole time. It's very difficult to explain how it feels. Like pain, you can remember something is painful but you can't remember the exact feeling of the pain. It's the same thing with a suspension, it's all a blur, a beautiful mess.

TIME IS NOT AN OBJECT THAT NEEDS TO BE AN ISSUE THOUGH. I HAD TO WAIT AROUND SIX MONTHS FOR THE BACK-PIECE, BUT I'LL LIVE WITH IT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE; I WOULD HAVE WAITED TEN YEARS IF I'D HAD TO

"I'm very lucky to know a lot of really nice people, amazingly kind people, who do suspension. There's always people that I really trust doing it. Like tattooing, there is a community of individuals who have their own teams and set-ups. It's one of those things where you couldn't possibly run into a horrible person at one of the meet-ups. You can be whoever you want to be and still be accepted."

When Grace is at home she likes to paint, relax, have a cup of tea and get high. I interviewed her on skype and I noticed she had two strips of paint beneath her eyes so I asked her what they were. "My warpaint!" she replies with a smile.

"People like to ramble on about what tattooing means to them, but I don't really know what it means to me. It's just something that's always been inside me. I just think that I do what I do because it feels natural. I don't do anything because it's cool, fashionable or trendy. I just try and stay as true to myself as I possibly can."





# THE HUMAN TOUCH



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Being someone whose artistic abilities amount to well-drawn stick figures (take my word for this), I am always blown away by brilliant art. It continually amazes me when an artist takes a blank canvas, or naked area of skin, and turns it into something that takes your breath away

In more recent years, with the onslaught of everything digital, a new art form has emerged that is equally as mind-blowing... we now see artists working with computers to create images that are pushing the boundaries of art and creating a whole new arena to express their creative force. One such artist is Jason Frieling. Jason has been around for a fair few years now; making his mark on both skin and canvas, but it is his 3D modelling work that really pushes the boundaries. We're talking dark and twisted images that jump out and leave you feeling a little breathless.

"I was introduced to art by my grandfather when I was about five

years old. He would always come over and draw cartoons with me; he definitely sparked my interest in art from the beginning. Once I got to high school, I started taking as many art classes as I could. I did not really learn much from the art programs they offered, but this was probably because I was preoccupied with more unproductive things back then! After high school, I continued my study

in art and went to college for a few years. I found myself not learning a whole lot at school, so I took it upon myself to get as much info on art that I could. I would buy so many books and pretty much any kind of learning material I could get my hands on."

I FOUND MYSELF NOT LEARNING A WHOLE LOT AT SCHOOL, SO I TOOK IT UPON MYSELF TO GET AS MUCH INFO ON ART THAT I COULD. I WOULD BUY SO MANY BOOKS AND PRETTY MUCH ANY KIND OF LEARNING MATERIAL I COULD GET MY HANDS ON



Trent Aitken Smith © Jason Frieling

With this passion and love cemented as a solid foundation, Jason was off the mark and though tattooing had been in the back of Jason's mind for a while, it wasn't until he got his first tattoo that his interest in the tattoo world was truly ignited.

"I was introduced to tattoos when I was about 18 and got my first – an atom molecule on my inner arm. I got the atom molecule because it is the only thing I know of that never dies. It is forever. At the time I think I just wanted to get a tattoo like most people when they get their first. I did not really have a plan other than I knew I wanted that particular tattoo. If I knew then what I know now, I would have taken the time to find an artist. And when I did, 🙌"





I SOON REALIZED THAT THEY DIDN'T KNOW  
WHAT THEY WERE DOING AS MUCH AS I  
DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS DOING. I LEARNED  
THAT I DIDN'T KNOW SHIT AND NEEDED TO  
FIGURE IT OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE





meanings behind them. I think the art will remind you of the time and place you were when you got it, so letting the artist do their thing is what I prefer when getting tattooed. I used to think about tattooing in high school, but never thought it would be something

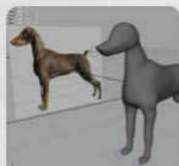
my portfolio together with as many tattoo photos and artwork as I had at the time and started looking around for a place to work. I landed my first gig at a local street shop pumping out flash art and any custom tattoos I could get my hands on. I soon

I THINK THE ART WILL REMIND YOU OF THE TIME AND PLACE YOU WERE WHEN YOU GOT IT, SO LETTING THE ARTIST DO THEIR THING IS WHAT I PREFER WHEN GETTING TATTOOED.

that was possible for me to do for a living. Then after getting the tattoo I thought to myself, I could see myself enjoying this environment for life."

With the first tattoo experience under his belt, it was time to jump in and get his new career off the ground. As always, it took a few false starts before Jason found himself in the right shop, with the right creative environment, but then it was all systems go.

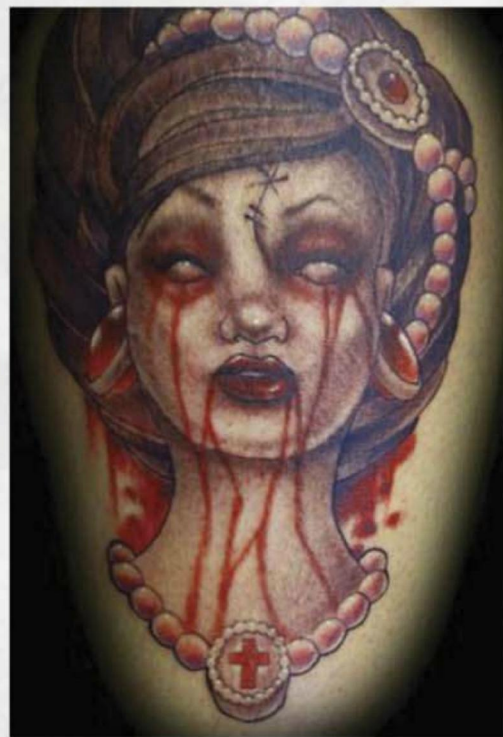
"I have never done a traditional apprenticeship. I mainly learned by tattooing pig feet and many crazy friends. I spent a lot of time getting tattooed at local tattoo shops in an attempt to try to soak up as much knowledge as I could. Then after a couple years of studying and practicing I felt it was time to look for a job. In 2005, I got my first machines and



#### THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

3D modelling (also known as meshing) is the process of developing a mathematical representation of any three-dimensional surface of object (either inanimate or living) via specialised software. The product is called a 3D model. It can be displayed as a two-dimensional image through a process called 3D rendering, or used in a computer simulation of physical phenomena. The model can also be physically created using 3D printing devices. Models may be created automatically or manually. The manual modelling process of preparing geometric data for 3D computer graphics is similar to plastic arts such as sculpting. Fair warning though - in the remaining boxes, we are about to get hyper technical on your ass...

I would have let the artist have more artistic freedom with the tattoo. The molecule tattoo will probably be the only tattoo that will ever have any real meaning to me. Everything else I get tattooed on me is more for the art side of it and not for me to have some crazy





realized that they didn't know what they were doing as much as I didn't know what I was doing. I learned that I didn't know shit and needed to figure it out as soon as possible. I left that shop for many reasons, but mainly to tighten everything up in my drawing and tattooing.

"So I took a big step back and started to try and figure things out the right way. At this point I was hanging around custom shops and mainly just talking to the artists as much as I could; about how they do what they were doing, when they are doing it. After I felt I had a good foundation to start, I got a job at an all custom tattoo shop."

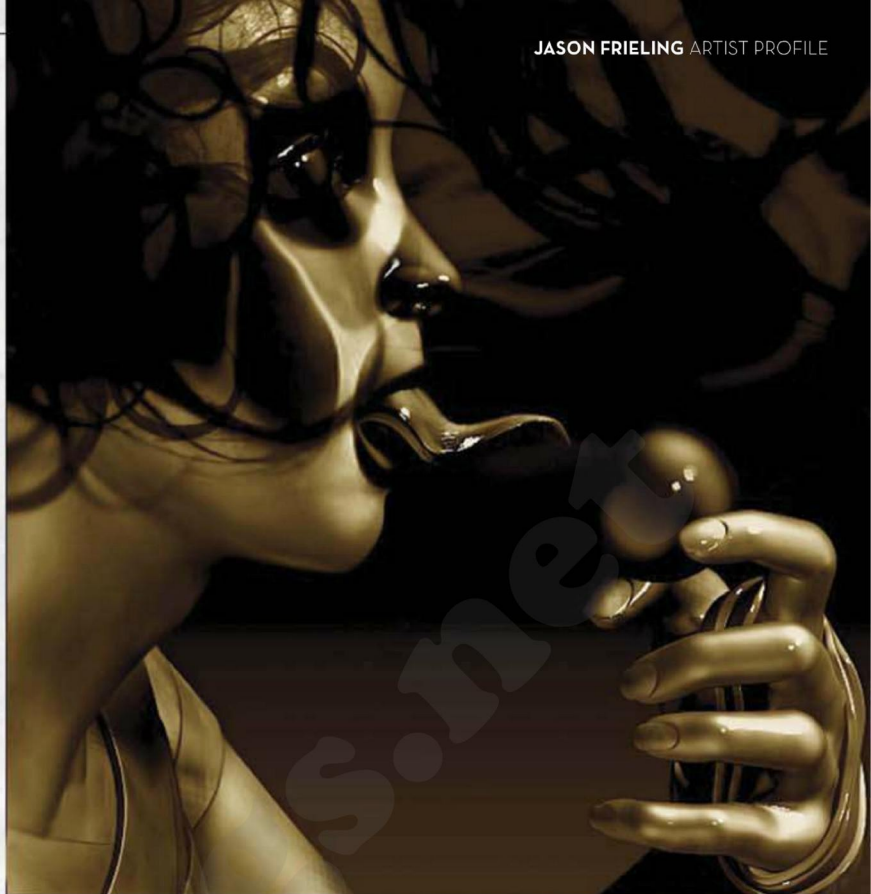
Putting in the hours and honing his work to ensure he was pushing out the best work he could, it wasn't long before 3D modelling caught his eye and drew him into another art form; one that was going to prove to be as successful as his tattooing and canvas based work he had done previously:

"After a year or so I started going to a few conventions to get my feet wet. I left that shop and started fine-tuning everything again; reading book after book and just studying art every day. After about another year of doing this, I started working at yet another shop for about three years. It

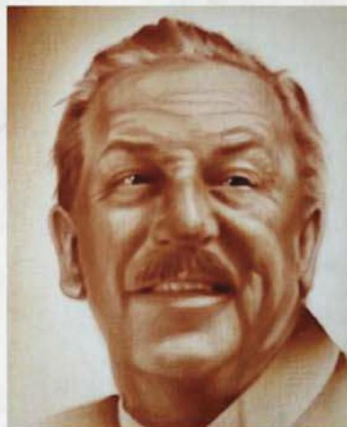


#### TYPES OF MODELLING (I)

Still a fairly new method of modelling, 3D digital sculpting has become very popular in the few short years it has been around. There are currently three types of digital sculpting; displacement, which is the most widely used among applications at the moment; volumetric; and dynamic tessellation. Displacement uses a dense model (often generated by subdivision surfaces of a polygon control mesh) and stores new locations for the vertex positions through use of a 32-bit image map that stores the adjusted locations. Volumetric (which is based loosely on Voxels) has similar capabilities as displacement but does not suffer from polygon stretching when there aren't enough polygons in a region to achieve a deformation.



MY GOAL IS TO ONLY USE 3D MODELLING AS A WAY OF GETTING AN IMAGE TOGETHER FOR A TATTOO OR A PAINTING, BUT I STILL APPROACH MY ART AND TATTOOING IN TRADITIONAL WAYS BY TAKING PHOTOS OR GATHERING REFERENCE



was here that I took the time to learn the 3D modelling programs to try to push myself to a different approach to everything, trying to do something new. It was frustrating learning, but well worth the effort in the end.

"Things change all the time and I will always try to keep up with that change. Through the years, I have noticed that computers are basically taking over every industry. What makes our industry any different?

Ever since Photoshop was introduced to the tattooing world, things have definitely taken a huge leap forward. I believe the same is just waiting for 3D modelling to help the art and tattoo industry take another leap forward. I did some research on different sculpting programs and have used everything from 3D-Coat to Mudbox and Sculptress. There are a lot of programs out there, and the one I felt the most comfortable with that seemed



like it was not limited to what it could do by itself, was ZBrush. This sculpting program definitely stood out the most to me. It seems to be very user friendly

things are best done in Photoshop; mainly because you're not looking to rig a model or make it perfect unless you plan to print it into a 3D sculpture

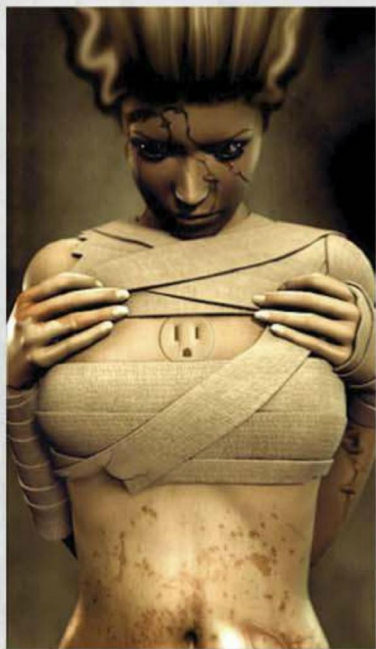
I GET BORED EASILY AND I JUST LIKE TO SWITCH THINGS UP ALL THE TIME TO KEEP THINGS INTERESTING FOR ME. I WAS DRAWING BEFORE PAINTING AND PAINTING BEFORE TATTOOING. THE 3D MODELLING SOFTWARE IS THE MOST RECENT MEDIUM I USE TO CREATE MY ART

and the most dynamic software. With ZBrush you can manipulate the lights, textures, materials, and colour.

"I don't always sketch an idea onto paper before I start sculpting in 3D, but I have found that it seems to help me get my idea down in ZBrush much faster. I have been using programs like ZBrush to sculpt my models just as you would with clay. I then take my model into programs like Photoshop and start painting in the details and colours. Even though you could use ZBrush to do almost everything, I still find that some

or send it to a video game. But trust me, there is a lot that goes into this and most in the gaming industry have various jobs. For instance someone sculpts, another person rigs the mesh, and someone else will colour it. There is so much to learn with the 3D stuff so I try to learn the most important things first and just the stuff that will help me get my vision across. I am not trying to do everything to make a working model in 3D, maybe in the future, but my main use for 3D is to just get my vision on paper. My goal is to only use 3D modelling as a way of getting an image together for a tattoo or a painting, but I still approach my art and tattooing in traditional ways by taking photos or gathering reference. I just try to do whatever it takes to get the best result for whatever I'm trying to create."

With computer technology seeping its way into most areas of life these days, the only way to stay ahead of the pack is to embrace it and get it to work for you, something Jason seems to be proving successful at. But as he will admit himself, it isn't all about keeping up-to-date, there is also the intrinsic need in the artist to find better ways to get a creative idea out and presentable.



"I get bored easily and I just like to switch things up all the time to keep things interesting for me. I was drawing before painting and painting before tattooing. The 3D modelling software is the most recent medium I use to create my art. I just try to keep my art interesting and fun for myself to create. With these different mediums, I approach my art in various ways. Sometimes I do the realism thing by approaching art with a photo reference or a 3D mesh and then paint what I see. And sometimes I do more of a memory drawing with no reference or a mixture of them. I mainly do what I feel like at the time and if it seems fun." 🐼



#### TYPES OF MODELLING (II)

Dynamic tessellation is similar to Voxel but divides the surface using triangulation to maintain a smooth surface and allow finer details. These methods allow for a very artistic exploration as the model will have a new topology created over it once the models form and possibly details have been sculpted. The new mesh will usually have the original high-resolution mesh information transferred into displacement data or normal map data if for a game engine. Funnily enough, we don't understand a word of this either.





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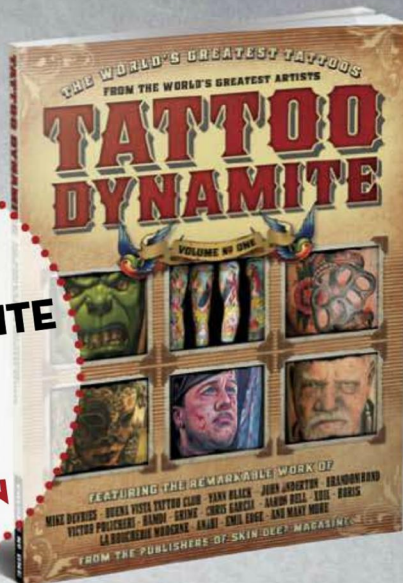
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# THE CAT IN THE HAT!

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The Brazilian painter, Sérgio Ferro, would often paint classical figures and leave them half-finished before going back and splashing them with paint. This would create a challenging visual marriage/contest of different art movements

Due to political reasons, Ferro was exiled from his own country for 30 years and lived in France where he continued to paint as well as teach at the Grenoble School of Architecture. As a young boy, Loïc Lavenu – known to the tattoo world as Xoil – would go over to his friends house and hang out.

"I used to be there all the time, I'd stay over quite a lot. We were pretty much best friends as teenagers. Just



MY FRIEND'S DAD WAS ACTUALLY SERGIO FERRO, AND HIS ART WOULD ALWAYS BE ON SHOW AT THE HOUSE; BUT I NEVER REALLY LOOKED AT IT, BECAUSE I WASN'T INTO IT AT THE TIME

yesterday I was talking to somebody about my influences. My friend's dad was actually Sergio Ferro, and his art would always be on show at the house, but I never really looked at it, because I wasn't into it at the time; but I think it influenced me subconsciously. He would just splatter things, and there'd always be something beautiful in the middle of all the mess."

Looking now at the work of Loïc Lavenu, one can clearly see the influence of Ferro, something that

must have buried itself deep within the mind of young Loïc, and come alive in his own art some years later. Born and raised in a small village in France, Loïc believed that it was important to be ambitious and to seek something different, despite being a self-confessed lazy child.

"It was important that I get out of there, and when I was 20, I did. I was lost, and knew I had to try and find my own way. I remember when I was a kid and we'd go to the









**SÉRGIO FERRO (I)**

Sérgio Ferro was born July 25, 1938, in Curitiba (Brazil). After a degree in architecture, obtained at the Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo of São Paulo, he continued specialization in museum studies and sémiologie. From 1962 to 1970 he worked as a professor of Art History and Aesthetics in various universities, then became a professor at the School of Architecture of Grenoble until 1997.

nearest town, I remember this old guy with a half-sleeve. The tattoos were very old and traditional and they amazed me. There was just something I felt, I fell in love with the picture of it, being old and having tattoos. Being the owner of your life." Loïc's interest in tattooing grew, especially when his brother, who was in the Army, came home once with some tattoo tools and started tattooing on Loïc.

When Loïc was eventually able to get out of the village he grew up in, he moved to Paris and settled in a squat for a couple of years. During this time he started hanging out at various tattoo shops and became a piercer. "I was really keen to stop my old life that I couldn't go on living, I just wanted some change. I took my own road and started tattooing by myself."

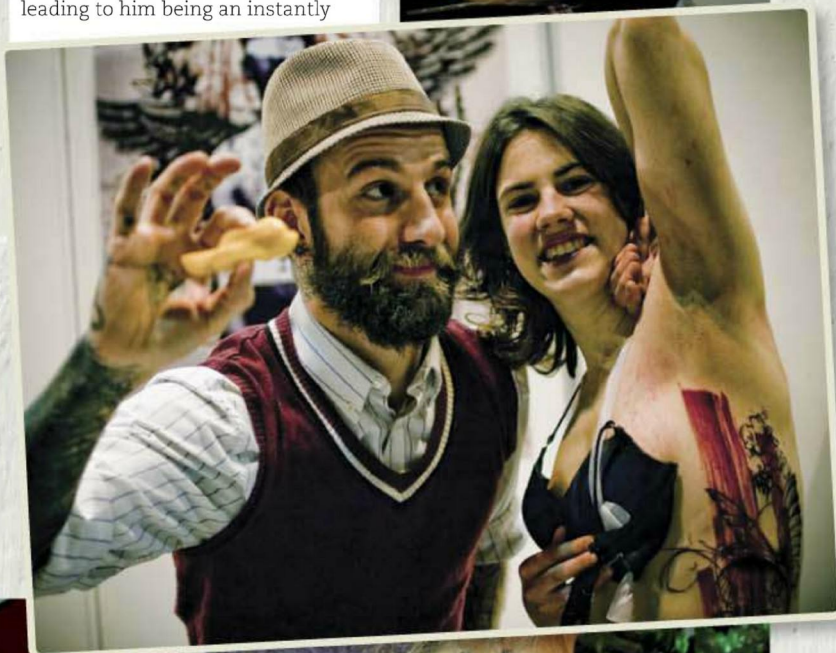
He would practice for hours in the squat, pushing himself daily to become better. "That was always my ambition, to grow and grow doing something that I love. It took a long time to teach myself, I was tattooing on friends and also people that didn't have any money, but I just kept going and going. Eventually I did get work in a tattoo shop, but it didn't work out.

I had to move further away and find somewhere where I felt the spirit was right. Whilst I had been in the squat tattooing shitty stuff, it actually made me good with operating a tattoo machine and technically I'd come a long way."

Finding his direction, his self-discipline had begun to really pay off. "I would force myself to make perfect lines, to make perfect squares. I wanted to be as technical as possible, and I was always trying to challenge myself. For example, I would take traditional flash and make it into something entirely different." When Loïc was younger, he used to design fliers and album covers for bands, using mostly a collaging technique. His interest in graphic design and collaging soon eked its way into his tattoo-style, leading to him being an instantly



I WAS REALLY KEEN TO STOP MY OLD LIFE THAT I COULDN'T GO ON LIVING. I JUST WANTED SOME CHANGE. I TOOK MY OWN ROAD AND STARTED TATTOOING BY MYSELF



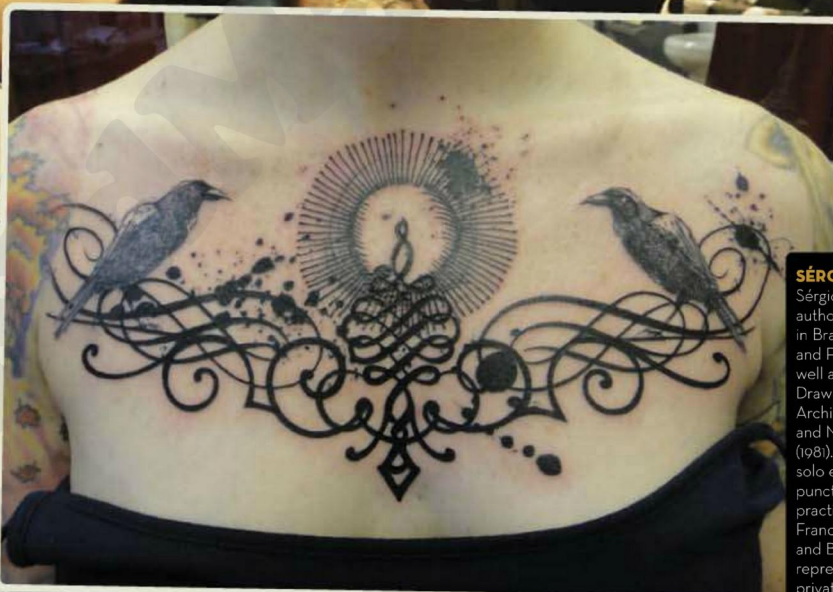




I NEVER REALLY FOUND IT THAT HARD TO DO, IT FELT NATURAL, SO THAT'S WHERE I BELIEVED I SHOULD HEAD WITH MY TATTOOING. I STILL HAVE A LOT MORE TO LEARN

recognisable tattoo artist, relatively early on in his career.

"I never really found that hard to do, it felt natural, so that's where I believed I should head with my tattooing. I still have a lot more to learn. When I look at the first pieces I did right back at the beginning, I can see what I have learnt since, I can see that it is always evolving, and that's what it should be doing. The more and more you question yourself and what you do, the more you are going to find, and ultimately the more you are going



#### SÉRGIO FERRO (II)

Sérgio Ferro is the author of articles in Brazilian journals and French, as well as books on Drawing (1976), Architecture (1979), and Michelangelo (1981). Numerous solo exhibitions punctuated his practice since 1963; France, Brazil, Greece and Belgium. Ferro is represented in many private and public collections.

to learn. I continue in my own way, I work on it, and at the same time I'm digging around for more. People have always liked my graphic design style of tattooing, and it's always felt good for me to work in that way."

What, for me, is also most prominent about Loïc's style, is his choice of palette. Red and black seem to be appearing heavily in his work, despite seeing the occasional

flash of a blue, or an orange.

"Red and black work really well. Red and black are the colours of revolution. They are strong and powerful looking. However, sometimes if you want to convey something like a sweet emotion, black and red may not be the colours to use. Actually, with my new palette, I am trying to go with less red and to be able to work with all of the colours. 🍌"





"All my tattoos are experimental," he says and after a short pause, "I call myself a gold-nugget finder." I ask him what he means by that and he explains, "when you're looking for gold, you're coming up with all these different ways to try and find it. So if you're good, you're passionate, and you work hard, you'll find gold every day. Every day, you find these tiny pieces of gold... and sometimes you just find a fucking big nugget. Sometimes we find the piece that is the masterpiece! A tattoo that fits the body perfectly, that simply works. You can't control that. I don't consider myself to be the best, but because I do something that is different, I see myself as a gold-nugget finder, and even though the big fucking nuggets aren't there every day... one should always be looking for them."

Evolving within his own tattooing is very important to Loïc, particularly finding the perfect relationship between human and tattoo. "Every day you should be looking at your tools, and the more you experiment with them, the closer you'll get to finding that relationship. Every three or six months I find it important to change my palette. I'm using less of the red now, trying to become better at working without it. I've even just started simply using a different shade of red, or even an orange. It's about growing another step, and then another, then another. One at a time. I feel I find the harmony



THE MORE AND MORE YOU QUESTION ABOUT YOURSELF AND WHAT YOU DO, THE MORE YOU ARE GOING TO FIND, AND ULTIMATELY THE MORE YOU ARE GOING TO LEARN. I CONTINUE IN MY OWN WAY. I WORK ON IT, AND AT THE SAME TIME I'M DIGGING AROUND FOR MORE

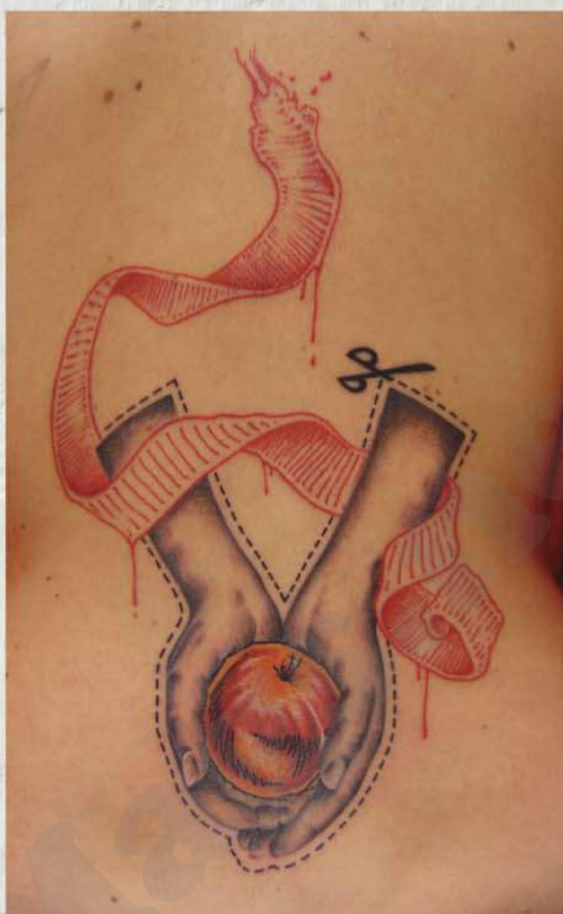
between human and tattoo when the tattoo is larger, like a backpiece or something. It gives you a larger canvas and there is more of the human body to work with."

When I first saw Loïc's tattooing I wasn't surprised to discover he was French. There was something about it that reminded me of French art, and so I asked him if he could perhaps explain why I made that assumption.

"Well, in France, the style is very graphic. But if you go to Germany, or the US, you'll see the style is very traditional, very old-school, but also way broader. The UK also. In France, the history is different. For a long time there were nothing but jail tattoos." (The stereotypical view of the tattooed individual being a thug or a member of a motorcycle gang







#### LE ROUGE ET LE NOIR (I)

Here's an interesting snippet for you considering Xoïl's take on the colours of the revolution: *Le Rouge et le Noir* (The Red and the Black), 1830, by Stendhal, is a historical psychological novel in two volumes, chronicling a provincial young man's attempts to socially rise beyond his modest upbringing with a combination of talent and hard work, deception and hypocrisy – yet who ultimately allows his passions to betray him. The novel's composite full title, *Le Rouge et le Noir: Chronique du XIXe siècle* (The Red and the Black: A Chronicle of the 19th century), indicates its two-fold literary purpose, a psychological portrait of the romantic protagonist, Julien Sorel, and an analytic, sociological satire of the French social order under the Bourbon Restoration (1814–30). In English, *Le Rouge et le Noir* is variously translated as *Red and Black*, *Scarlet and Black*, and *The Red and the Black*, without the sub-title.

was something that remained the dominant view in France only up until very recently. Unlike the rest of the world, France had made its arrival in the tattooing world quite late, perhaps because of the jail tattoo being such a dominant force until recently. Once that changed, things had to be very different in order to put France on the tattooing map, hence the graphic-design style so originally conceived within Loïc's tattooing.) "But what we do now is still inspired by that old school French stuff. It is generally very dark and there is lots of lettering and lots of scratches."

Loïc has been tattooing for 12 years now. Whilst he is mostly based in France, he also works on the road, most notably for two months at Tattoo Culture in Brooklyn. But when he is at home, he works from the studio he built eight years ago, Needles Side, in a small town not far from the borders of Switzerland and Italy. His partner, Anne, also the mother of his children, runs the shop while he



I WOULD FORCE MYSELF TO MAKE PERFECT LINES, TO MAKE PERFECT SQUARES. I WANTED TO BE AS TECHNICAL AS POSSIBLE, AND I WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO CHALLENGE MYSELF

does the tattooing, which for him is strictly custom-work. Two others work with him, an apprentice and an old childhood friend.

"It's a cool street shop and it's a nice quiet place for working. It's in a small town, but customers still come from all around to be tattooed there. With being on the road so much, then being back in

France working from Needles Side, tattooing is now pretty much my life. Even if I take a break, it's still all about tattoos. You're wearing them on your body, you're putting them onto other peoples bodies, they don't leave you. Ever. When you're tattooing it's your whole life."

I asked Loïc about the preparation involved behind a 🍌





tattoo. "Generally I spend about an hour – perhaps a little more or a little less – on photoshop, designing the idea. Then I do the tattoo, for which I use a stencil from what I've created in photoshop.

"The positive side of tattooing now is that we tattoo more and more and more," Loïc responded when I asked him about how he saw tattooing in the 21st century. "Generally, in society, people don't have the same bad idea about tattoos like they used to, but also now that it has become much more lucrative, there are a lot of bad people owning shops and making it all about the money. I'm staying in Camden at the moment, and there are a lot of great tattoo shops, but also shops that only appear to be in it for the money. So there is the ying and the yang.

"But I will not spit on it. We all want to be somebody, to make

our way. For me it means that I've stopped working in bad shops, and I try and work hard pushing the artform forwards. I remember when I was younger, people would laugh at me because my sketchbook was awful when I started. So what do you do when everyone laughs at you? I still wanted to tattoo so there was only one thing for me to do... kick my own ass every day to get better. That's what I taught myself when I was living in the squat, scratching on people, scratching on myself. I had to work my ass off.

"It's good that there are lots of artists because you then have to push yourself harder, to make it better. Wow. Wow. Wow. That's what happens now when you look at what people are doing in tattooing. Tattooing is so popular now, and I think society has finally realised that we are not trouble, that we belong to something important, an

#### LE ROUGE ET LE NOIR (II)

Le Rouge et le Noir occurs in the latter years of the Bourbon Restoration (1814–30) and the days of the 1830 July Revolution that established the Kingdom of the French (1830–48). Julien Sorel's worldly ambitions are motivated by the emotional tensions, between his idealistic Republicanism (especially nostalgic allegiance to Napoleon), and the realistic politics of counter-revolutionary conspiracy, by Jesuit-supported legitimists, notably the Marquis de la Mole, whom Julien serves, for personal gain. Presuming a knowledgeable reader, the novelist Stendhal only alludes to the historical background of *Le Rouge et le Noir* – yet did sub-title it *Chronique de 1830* ('Chronicle of 1830').

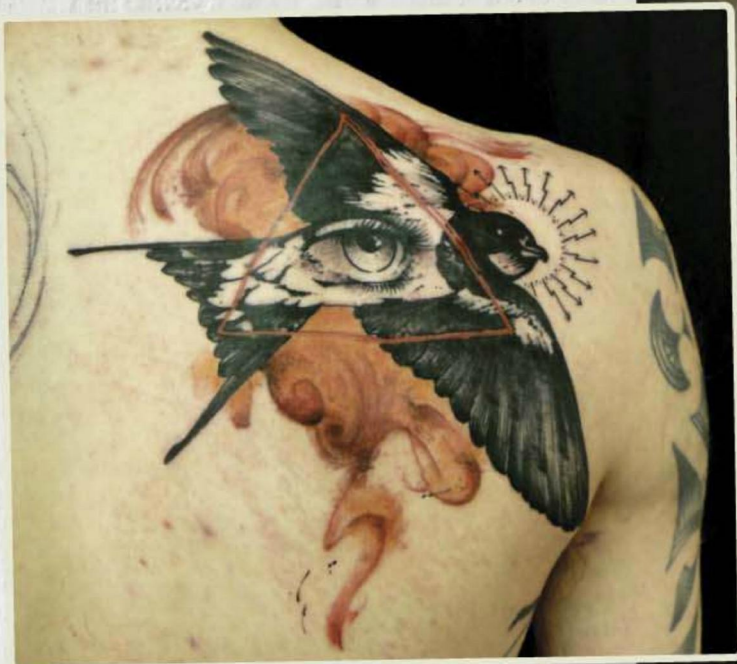


EVERY DAY YOU SHOULD BE LOOKING AT YOUR TOOLS, AND THE MORE YOU EXPERIMENT WITH THEM, THE CLOSER YOU'LL GET TO FINDING THAT RELATIONSHIP



idea, an art. People want to prove that they're something, prove that they're from a particular place, or that they listen to a specific type of music, or they're a skin-head, a metallor. Or they're someone that listens to rock, or folk. With tattooing you can take that further. For example, a rocker is most likely going to have old school tattoos. More and more tattooed people are





#### A PERFECT CIRCLE?

Giotto di Bondone (1266/7 - January 8, 1337), better known simply as Giotto, was an Italian painter and architect from Florence in the late Middle Ages. He is generally considered the first in a line of great artists who contributed to the Italian Renaissance. The late-16th century biographer, Giorgio Vasari, recounts a number of such stories about Giotto's skill. He writes that when Cimabue was absent from the workshop, his young apprentice painted such a life-like fly on the face of the painting that Cimabue was working on, that he tried several times to brush it off. Vasari also relates that when the Pope sent a messenger to Giotto, asking him to send a drawing to demonstrate his skill, Giotto drew, in red paint, a circle so perfect that it seemed as though it was drawn using a compass, and instructed the messenger to give that to the Pope.

keeping the movement alive."

I asked Loïc what it feels like to be the tattooer, the person behind all these tattoos you see on all these individuals in all these countries around the world.

"If you listen to what the old guys say about tattoo artists, you're considered someone very special within the community. People bring you gifts, sometimes you're their doctor, or you can be their psychiatrist. It's kind of like the modern equivalent of a shaman – and because I travel a lot and like

I REMEMBER WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, PEOPLE WOULD LAUGH AT ME BECAUSE MY SKETCHBOOK WAS AWFUL WHEN I STARTED. SO WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN EVERYONE LAUGHS AT YOU? I KICK MY OWN ASS EVERY DAY TO GET BETTER

to tattoo people in other countries, it's almost like I am a nomad too.

"I consider myself a worldwide citizen. I'm French, but I hate the French government. I hate a lot of what's here, but the same goes with other places too. I believe in human citizenship and not to swear only by my own country. I just love to be all over the place. Tattoos represent the moment, so I have loads of different tattoos. Colourful, traditional, graphic, shitty – but I don't believe in having them covered up, no matter what they are. They represent who I was at the time, they are mapping my history." 🐼





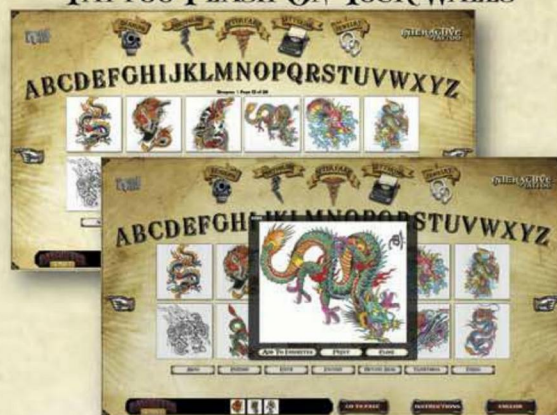
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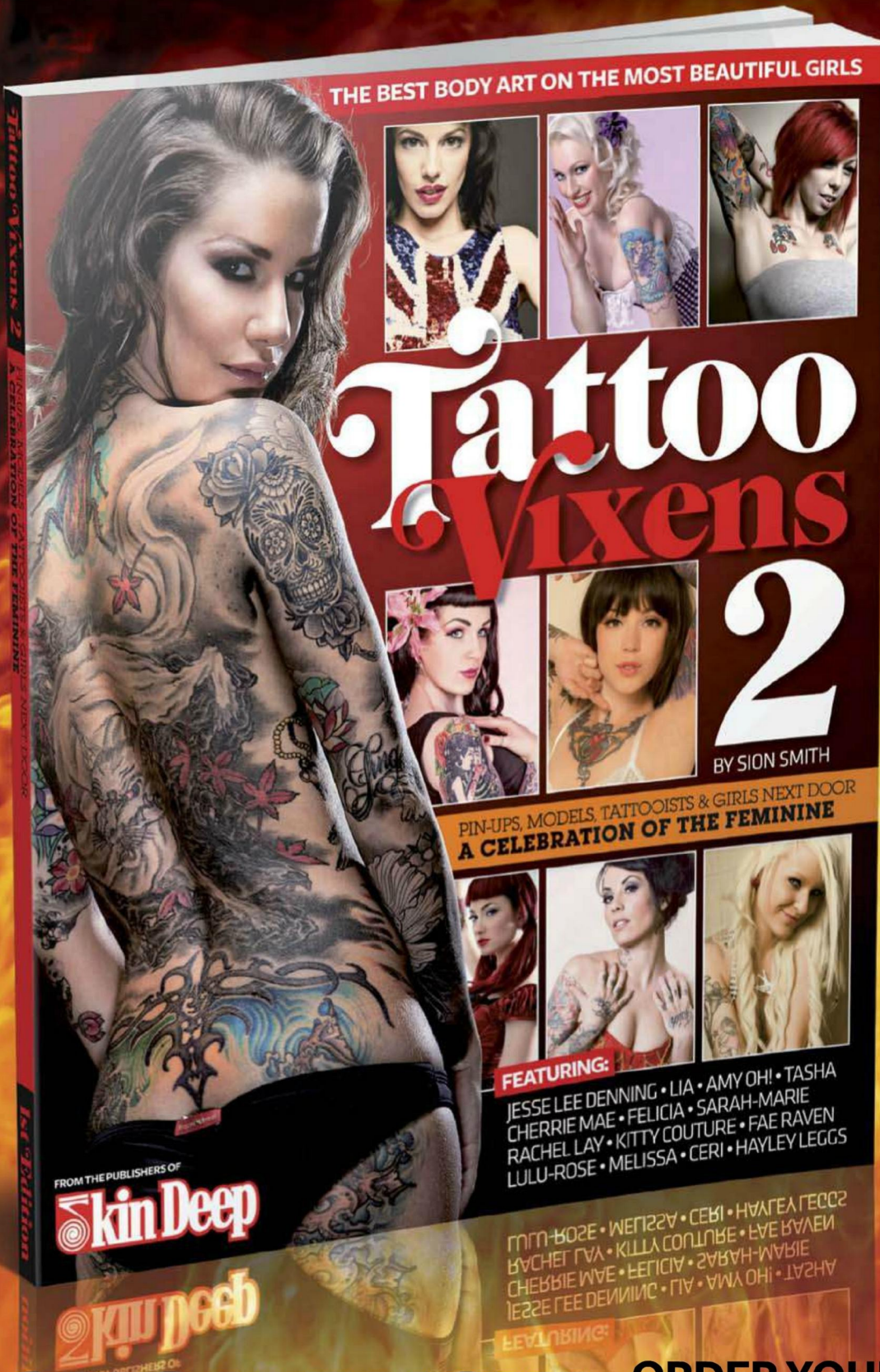
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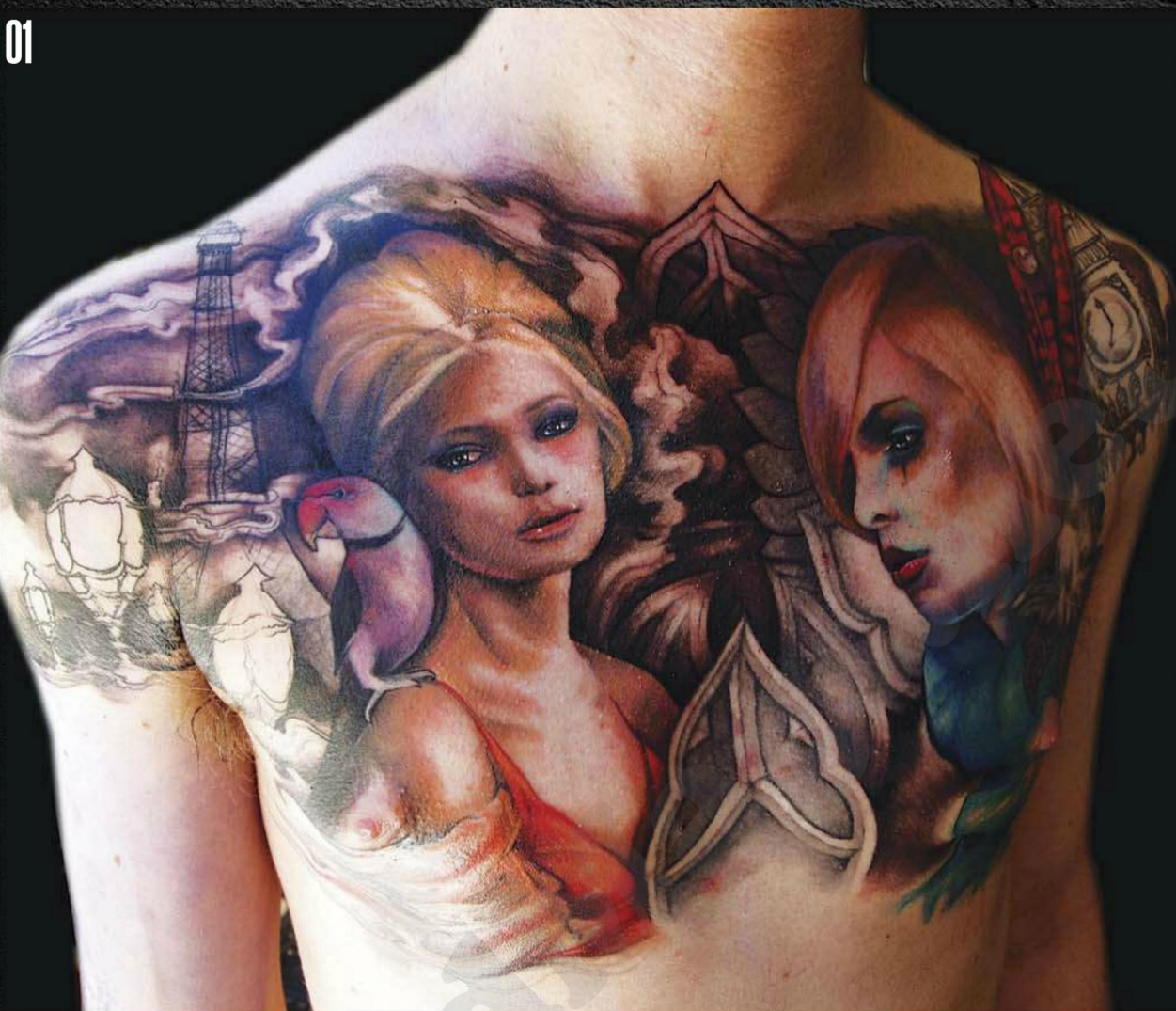
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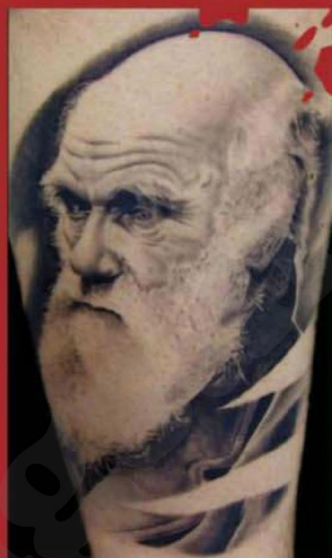
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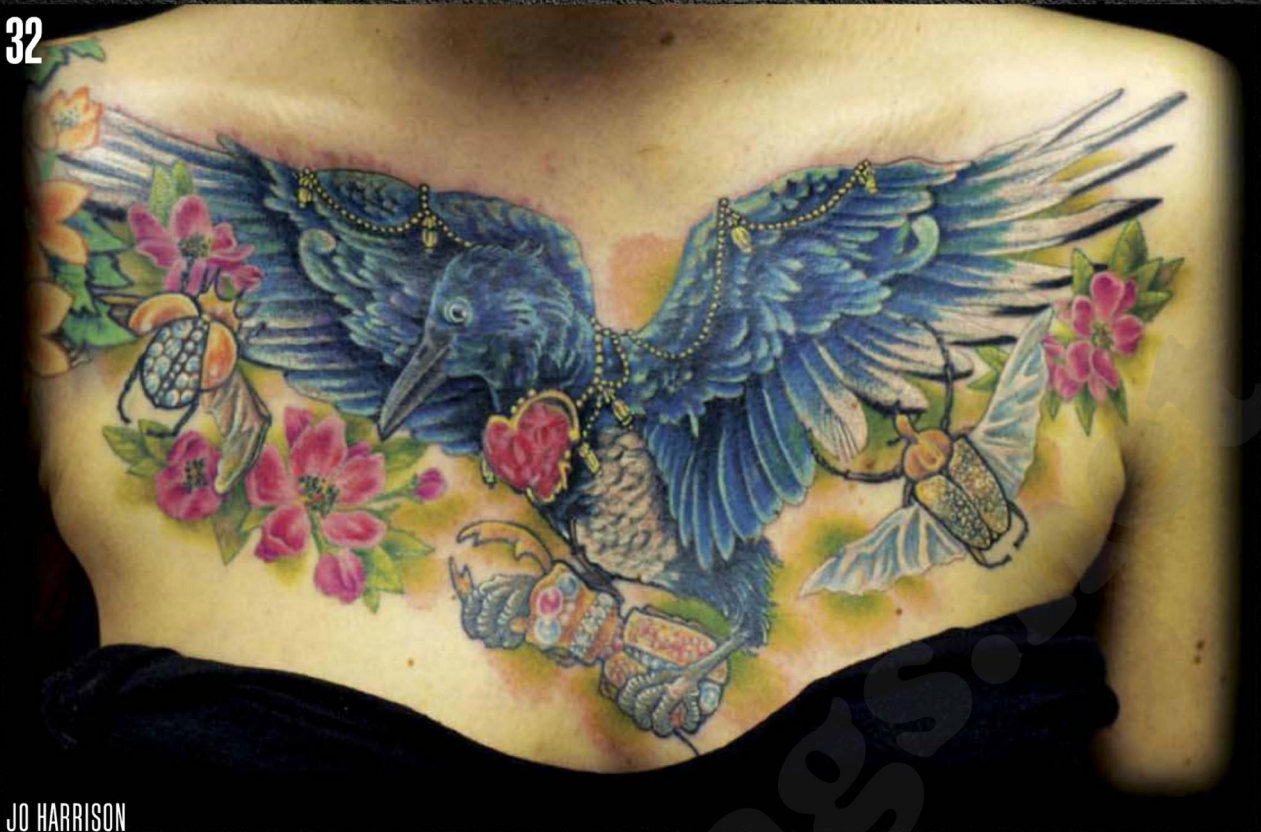
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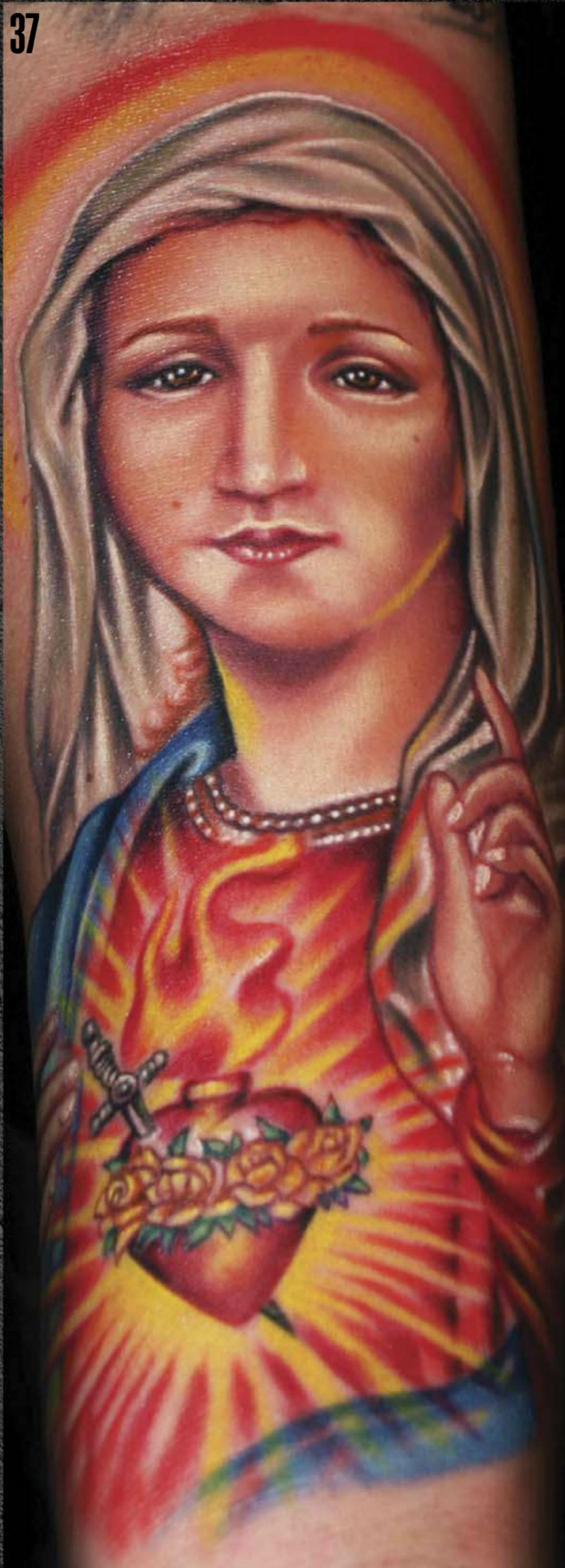




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ANOTHER

# LOOSE SCREW



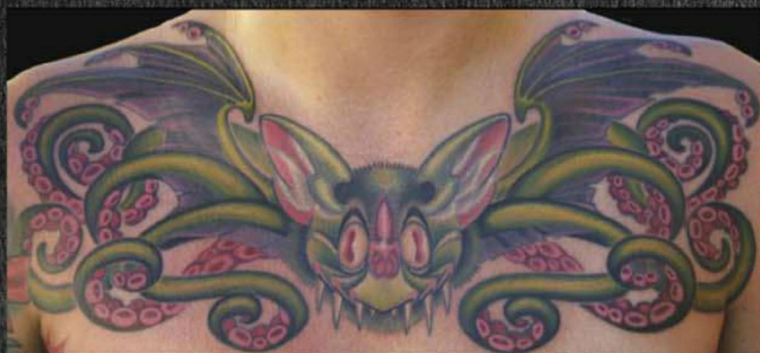
For some tattooists, the call of the ink comes later in life; maybe after getting their first tattoo, going to a convention, or even stumbling across the medium through chance. But to others it is imprinted in their minds from a very early age. One such tattooist is Jason Stephan, who just about wraps up our plundering of the crew at Loose Screw...

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Jason has spent his life chasing the buzz of the tattoo machine; moving around the country, picking up skills, and generally becoming a world class tattoo artist along the way. Now settled at Loose Screw, Jason took the time to talk to us about how it all came about.

"I always knew I wanted to get tattooed. As long as I can remember I



I WAS THE GUY IN MY GROUP OF FRIENDS THAT COULD DRAW, AND MY FRIENDS WOULD GET MY DRAWINGS TATTOOED ON THEM. THAT WAS CRAZY TO ME BECAUSE I WAS JUST GETTING FLASH

loved the way tattoos looked. I knew when I was old enough, that was the way I wanted to look. The day I turned 18, I got my first tattoo – I got a little dragon. At that time I didn't know how much they cost or all the different things I could get. The people I saw growing up that had tattoos all had traditional Asian imagery so I guess I thought, that's what I should get.

"I first got the idea that I may be able to get into tattooing from my friends. I was the guy in my group of friends that could draw and they would get my drawings tattooed on them. That was crazy to me because I was just getting flash. I didn't think my stuff was very cool compared to the things I saw on the walls of the tattoo shops

I'd been in. The tattooers doing the designs complimented my drawings because I'm sure it just broke up the monotony of doing the same flash over and over. That's when I first began to think I could do this for a living."

It must have been a strange thing to see a custom tattooist of Jason's calibre, walking into a flash shop with his amazing custom designs and see him looking up at the rows of flash thinking, I'm not as good as this. But, thankfully, Jason knew what he wanted to do and had the drive and passion to get what he wanted... the all-important apprenticeship.

"It was really hard and it took a couple years, but all of my begging and pleading finally paid off. An artist 🍀



Trent Atkin Smith © Jason Stephan









in Orlando, Florida, named Sailor Frank Dickerson, decided to give me a chance and began teaching me the beginnings of what would be my apprenticeship. Unfortunately we had a bit of a disagreement and he didn't trust my word enough to continue my apprenticeship.

"I had moved to Orlando because there were no legal tattoo shops in Florida, the county I grew up in. But by 1995, tattooing had been legalized so I moved back, talked to some of my friends, and they recommended that I go talk to an artist named Bobby D. I said anything I had to, to get in there. I agreed to redo my apprenticeship and he took me up on it. He made me start back at the groundfloor, but I still felt extremely fortunate. I'm sure it's still

I WON'T GO INTO ANY CRAZY DETAIL, BUT I HAD AN OLD SCHOOL APPRENTICESHIP. IT SUCKED. I WAS THERE AT LEAST 14 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK. I WAS TOTALLY IMMERSSED IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

hard, but it seemed way harder to me to get an apprenticeship back then because there were so few shops.

"I won't go into any crazy detail, but I had an old school apprenticeship. It sucked. I was there at least 14 hours a day, seven days a week. I was totally immersed in the learning process. After a year or so he let me start tattooing my friends and customers that he picked for me. I worked there for another year and after that I felt I had to move on. I know some people may think that I'm an asshole for learning how to tattoo and then not sticking around, but if you were me you would have left too. I don't regret anything that happened back then; I actually appreciate that I had such a tough time. It makes me appreciate what I do so much more. But I do feel like you have to have a certain type

of ego to put permanent art on people, and I could see that the put downs and poor treatment were never going to end. So, like I said, I had to move on."

With some training and a lot of hard graft under his belt, Jason went in search for another studio, somewhere else where he could learn more of his craft in an environment





that would push him further.

"I heard that J.D. Crowe needed a new tattooer at his shop, Ancient Art, in Yorktown. I took a bus up there, got the job, and headed back to Florida to collect my stuff and move. I ended up working for him for six or seven years. I had a great time! That was definitely a different time in tattooing. I worked 10-5, five days a week. We were busy as we could be. It is a military area, so we were doing one tattoo after the next. I didn't do much custom stuff back then; it didn't seem like anyone wanted it so I never really pushed it. I guess I was just happy making money putting tattoos on people."

Looking back, working at Ancient Art was going to prove a turning point in Jason's career. Not only did it give him a chance to practice and perfect his tattooing, it was also where he was to meet two of the most influential people in his life.

"I met some great people at Ancient

Art, and two people who would end up being two of the most important people in my life – my wife and mother of my children, Amanda Stephan, and my artistic partner, Jesse Smith. Towards the last year of me being at Ancient Art, I was going through a lot of changes. I was feeling like I was invisible as far as tattooing went; I worked in a shop with ten other artists and it was hard to stand out. I'm not sure many of the customers cared.

"Even though it was early in his career as well, I noticed Jesse really trying to push custom tattoos. I had always felt that I could put in a quality tattoo, but there was no real reason to get tattooed by me. I was just doing the same flash designs everyone else was doing. Then I got it in my mind that I wanted to show what I could do and let people see the art that was in my head. I was always inspired by heavy metal album covers and skateboard art, but as a tattoo artist, I was inspired more by Gunnar, Grime, Jime Litwalk and Tony Ciavaro. I loved that illustrative style of tattooing. It just felt like what I wanted to and was trying to do. I think that's another reason why Jesse and I became such close friends. We seemed to have similar influences in art."

But it was still going to take a few moves around Florida, a couple of stints at some shops, and strangely enough the end of a space travel era, before Jason finally found the place he would call home.

"I started to push my art more and started to get some results, but I knew that I would need to move to a new location to really change my life. My wife and I decided to move back to my 🌻





hometown, Rockledge, Florida, and open up Electric Eye Tattoo Studio. It was tough. My small hometown was not ready or into the type of artwork that I wanted to do, but over a couple years I was able to convince them to start seeing it my way. Electric Eye was never exactly what I wanted it to be and I hated being in charge of the business part; I couldn't separate the art and business. I ended up closing my shop and going to work at King Street Body Gallery, one city over in Cocoa, Florida. I loved it. By that time I had enough custom clientele to keep myself busy and I didn't have to worry about the business side that I didn't like. The guys there were great. Definitely some of my most fun times tattooing.

"Eventually I knew it would come to an end. I lived and worked in Brevard County, where the space shuttle goes up. When they started talking about no more space shuttle launches, I knew I would end up leaving. The economy had really all revolved around that shuttle and tons of people were losing their jobs. Practically every house on my street was for sale. Jesse had always tried to get me to move up to Richmond, Virginia. We had been doing conventions together over the years and always discussed art and tattooing; he and I have always been on the same page. That helped me at times when I felt I didn't fit in with what other people were doing. And my wife's family is also in Virginia,



I WAS ALWAYS INSPIRED BY HEAVY METAL ALBUM COVERS AND SKATEBOARD ART, BUT AS A TATTOO ARTIST, I WAS INSPIRED MORE BY GUNNAR, GRIME, JIME LITWALK AND TONY CIAVARRO

so it just seemed like the right fit."

Finally all the pieces fell into place. It was the right time and the right place and now all Jason needed to do was to show the tattoo world what he was capable of.

"When I first moved to Richmond, I worked with Jesse Smith and Thea Duskin at Ghostprint Gallery. It's a cool place but very private, and since I just moved to the area it was sort of difficult for me to get new clientele. Eventually Jesse decided to open up Loose Screw Tattoo. I miss working with Thea; she's

a great artist, but I needed to work in a shop that was more open to the public. Loose Screw Tattoo has been open for about eight or nine months now and I couldn't be happier. I feel like I am in an extremely creative environment. Everyone who works here is full custom and we're all staying pretty busy. The biggest reason for me moving here was to become the best artist I could be."

And it was definitely the right decision. Along with Loose Screw and Jesse, Jason's work has sky rocketed. The combination of a friend who thinks the same as he does, a shop that allows him to express his custom style to the full, and a heart and passion that gets put into everything he does, Jason is rocking the tattoo world to the max.

"I feel like I'm doing the best and most creative artwork of my entire life. For me, that's really great. I've been tattooing now for about 15 years and I think a lot of artists at this point get to feeling very content with how things are going and with what they are doing. I'm happy that I still see improvement in what I'm doing. I still feel excited about starting a new project; I want to keep moving forward for however long I am able to tattoo. I guess that's it. This is my life, my career, but I do feel like there's so much more."

And we eagerly look forward to the 'so much more', that Jason has in store for us in the future. If it is anything as good as his past output, we are onto another winner here. 🐼





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# THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS



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It's no secret to us ink-loving folk that tattooing is the equivalent of all other art forms, but sometimes it takes a little convincing to get others on the same page. Joe Capobianco's Hope Gallery, which opened in 2003 in New Haven, Connecticut, recently helped solidify this message with art and tattoo lovers alike thanks to its travelling Quick and Painful art show

With stops in L.A., New Haven, Miami and Chicago, Quick and Painful brought together flash designed by 19 of today's best lowbrow and pop artists – including Amanda Visell, David Horvath, Frank Kozik, Huck Gee, Tara McPherson and Ron English – and the unrivaled tattoo talents of Joe Capobianco, Eric Merrill, Tim Harris, Phil Young, Dan Smith and Scott White, to name but a few who tattooed said flash on attendees for the unbelievable bargain price of \$40.

"I knew a lot of fans who had tattoos from pop artists I had worked with, so I decided to ask those artists

to make flash sheets," says Nichole East, event organizer and manager of Hope Gallery. "The tattoo artists were easy. Since I work at Hope Gallery, I secured all of the artists that work here and then friends of theirs filled in the spots in other cities. All of the artists seemed excited to do the project – I don't think they knew what they were getting themselves into!"

And although those who preach the Gospel of Custom Tattoos may



frown upon flash, East says, "the tattoo trade is based on flash. People who say flash should be discouraged shouldn't be tattoo artists... flash was, and still is, used to help clients decide on what they want.

"In this day and age, with social media and the Internet, nothing is truly unique," she adds. "If you take a photo

ALL OF THE ARTISTS SEEMED EXCITED TO DO THE PROJECT – I DON'T THINK THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE GETTING THEMSELVES INTO!





of your tattoo and it ends up on the Internet, someone is able to duplicate it. Even in my case, I had a custom tattoo done on my neck and once it hit the Internet, multiple people now have my 'custom' tattoo on them. As long as artists' work ends up in books and on the Internet, it can and usually is copied, just like flash would be."

Needless to say, the art show was an incredible success or, as East puts it, "Quick and Painful was just that, a fast-paced whirlwind tour that was a lot of work... I feel this was definitely a once in a lifetime event for us."

With so much talent involved, it was difficult to choose one artist to spotlight, but alas, Huck Gee's extensive portfolio of art, his status as one of the most sought-after and inventive toy designers around, and of course, his personal collection of sweet tattoos made the UK native who now calls San Francisco home just the man:

**WHAT FIRST INFLUENCED YOU TO START MAKING ART AND WHAT WAS THE FIRST WORK YOU REMEMBER CREATING?**

**YES, FINGER PAINTING COUNTS!**

I think the first art I remember would be drawing army stuff on paper. Total stick figure planes, tanks, army men, the scene constantly building, all on one piece of paper, guns firing, bombs dropping, tanks rolling, until at the end you had stuff scribbled all over the paper – a complete mess. It was as much acting out a battle as it was drawing a picture. Ah, yes, good times.

**WAS THERE A PARTICULAR MOMENT WHEN YOU DECIDED YOU WERE GOING TO PURSUE ART FULL-TIME?**

I never planned on this crap panning out. I was just drawing for the sake of drawing. I guess the closest situation was when I quit my day job, then I jumped in feet first to see if I could make a living at this. But even then I didn't think of myself



as an artist, my job was just getting in the way of me making more stuff!

**TELL ME A BIT ABOUT THE EVOLUTION OF HUCK GEE AS AN ARTIST...**

I'm completely self-taught. I drew as a kid, but stopped drawing in high school after getting ridiculed one too many times for drawing dwarf-powered mechanical dragons.

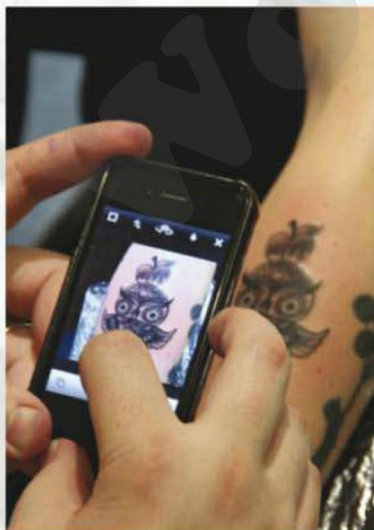
In my late teens I hooked up with a bunch of graf kids in L.A. and that lit the fire under my ass again. I got caught one too many times doing that and just generally started to spend more and more time drawing characters in my sketch books than doing actual lettering or getting up. A few years later, I stumbled over the work of Jason Siu, Eric So, Michael Lau, and discovered 🍌



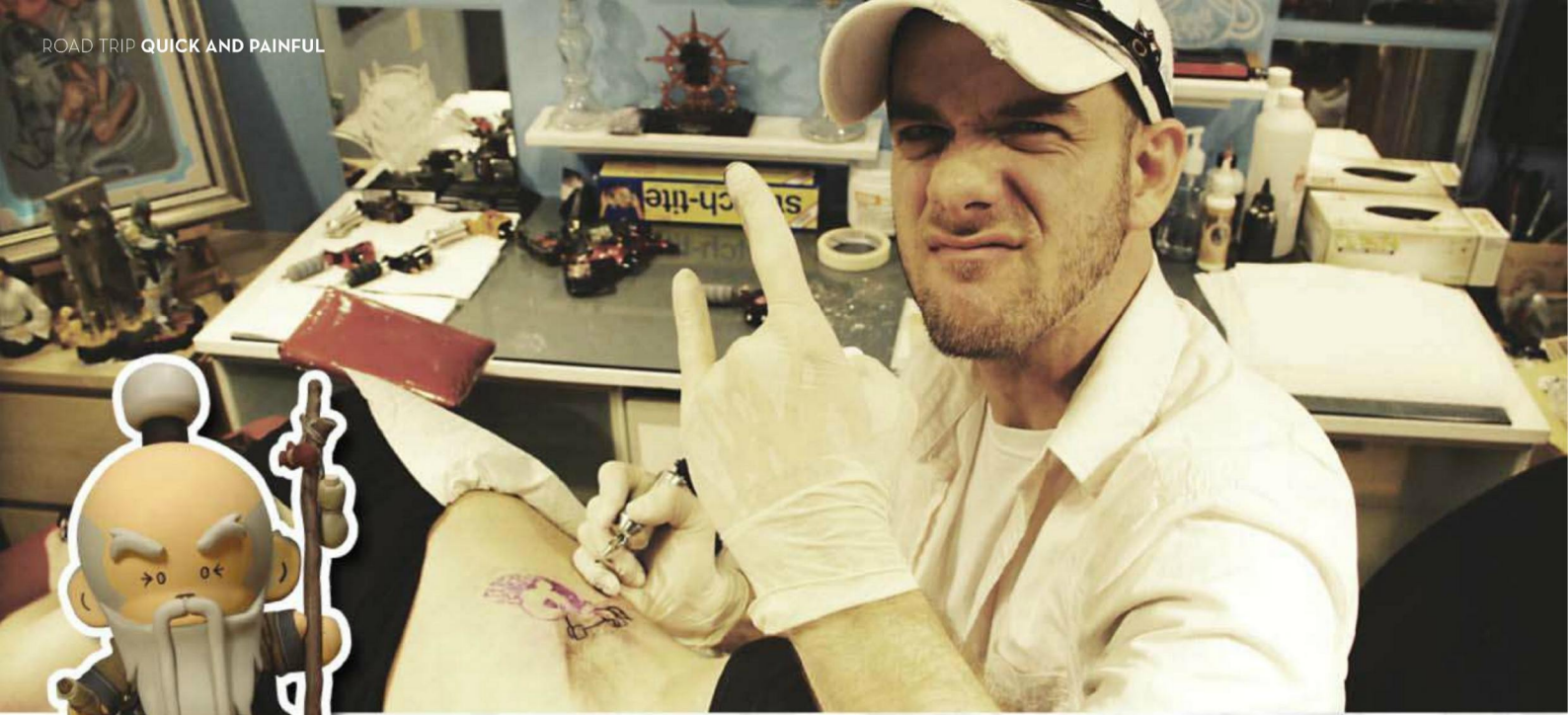
**JOE CAPOBIANCO**

The man behind Hope Gallery is renowned not only for his work in the world of tattooing, but also for his expert airbrushing skills. He has been creating modernized pin-up designs inspired by the 1950s for over 19 years; and his Capo Girl and her unique style have helped him win numerous awards at various tattoo events. In addition to being an artist through and through, he is also the head judge on Oxygen Network's Best Ink TV show.

**I STOPPED DRAWING IN HIGH SCHOOL AFTER GETTING RIDICULED ONE TOO MANY TIMES FOR DRAWING DWARF-POWERED MECHANICAL DRAGONS**







the wealth of art, illustration and character design in Japan.

Finally, I met Paul Budnitz creator of Kidrobot [the world's premier creator of limited edition art toys and apparel] and I finally had an outlet for everything I had been working up to.

#### TARA MCPHERSON

Based in New York City, Tara McPherson is a classically trained artist, holding a BFA from the Art Center in Pasadena, California with honours in illustration and a minor in fine art. She not only creates paintings and serigraphs that are shown in galleries across the world, but also designs concert posters, toys, advertisements, and painted comics and covers for DC Vertigo.

**YOUR SKULLHEAD DESIGN IS INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE AND A CULT CLASSIC, DID YOU KNOW YOU HAD SOMETHING SPECIAL WHEN YOU FIRST CREATED IT?**

Nah, I was fiddling around, trying to draw a stylized Jolly Roger. I left it sitting on my drawing table for a couple months before I decided to give him a body. I don't think I ever realized I had anything special, I just kinda dug the little fella.

**YOU'VE CALLED YOUR STYLE 'BASTARDIZED ASIAN POP CULTURE',**

EACH PIECE RECOLLECTS A CERTAIN TIME AND PLACE TO ME. SOME I'VE OUTGROWN THE MEANING, SOME WERE A SPUR OF THE MOMENT DECISION

**WHERE DOES MOST OF THIS EASTERN INFLUENCE COME FROM?**

It's a mash-up of everything these days. Originally, it was heavily influenced by Japanese character design, manga, anime, culture and history, but then I spent time travelling through Hong Kong, the Philippines, China, and I found myself inspired at every turn. Beautiful countries. Beautiful people.

**ONE OF YOUR VINYL TOYS IS ACTUALLY PART OF THE PERMANENT COLLECTION AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN NEW YORK, HOW DID YOU REACT TO THE NEWS? AND WHEN YOU'RE IN TOWN, DO YOU EVER TAKE TIME TO GO LOOK AT YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT?**



It's strange. I never strove to be in a museum or even a gallery for that matter. It's a bit validating, but other than that, I don't think it's had too much of an impact on me. I went to the MOMA once, saw it on display, resisted the temptation to tell everyone in the room that that was my piece on the shelf. Never been back since. Okay, I'll admit, I guess it is kinda cool.

**HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE QUICK AND PAINFUL SHOW, AND WOULD YOU GET ANY OF YOUR FLASH TATTOOED ON YOURSELF?**

Nichole, the organizer of Quick and Painful, also happens to be my badass manager. Due to my packed schedule,







I actually declined the show at first; it was a very last minute commitment. Because of the timing, the artwork on the sheet is a collection of my older illustration work. I think it laid out quite well for a flash sheet, though.

And yup... already have. I've got Skullhead on my neck.

**PLAYING DEVIL'S ADVOCATE, SOME TATTOO ARTISTS/ COLLECTORS MIGHT SAY THAT FLASH SHOULD BE SHUNNED RATHER THAN ENCOURAGED IN ORDER TO PREVENT NUMEROUS INDIVIDUALS ALL HAVING IDENTICAL TATTOOS, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?**

That sounds almost elitist to me. Flash is good for some, others may want something more personal, to each their own.

**SINCE WE'RE ON THE TOPIC OF TATTOOS, WHEN DID YOU GET YOUR FIRST ONE AND WHAT WAS IT?**

Shit, I got this awful prison gun tattoo of an anarchy symbol on my arm from my buddy's older brother who had just got out of state pen – it was awful. I paid him in vodka and beer; it has since been covered.

**CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE INK YOU HAVE AND WHAT EACH DESIGN MEANS?**

My work is each tied to a memory much more than each having a meaning. Each piece recollects a certain time and place to me. Some I've outgrown the meaning, some were a spur of the moment decision, but each piece is almost a personal flashcard for a time in my life. I like that.

**YOU RELEASED THE ART OF HUCK GEE, YOUR RETROSPECTIVE BOOK, ON JANUARY 1, WHY WAS NOW THE RIGHT TIME TO CREATE SUCH A TOME? WHEN CAN WE EXPECT VOL. 2?**

It felt right; I have a large enough body of work now. In fact, there's still quite a bit that got cut from the book.

Give me a couple of years and I'll tackle another retrospective. Maybe go bigger next time!

**LET'S SAY YOU WERE FORCED TO CHOOSE ONE WORK FEATURED IN THE BOOK TO TURN INTO A TATTOO ON YOURSELF, WHICH WOULD IT BE AND WHY?**

Probably Raku, my ninja raccoon characters. I've got a lot of myself in their storyline. It would be fitting.

**PAUL BUDNITZ OF KIDROBOT HAS CALLED YOU 'THE GREATEST TOY ARTIST ON THE PLANET', WHAT'S YOUR REACTION TO THAT STATEMENT? WOULD YOU AGREE?**

Nah, I'm flattered by the comment, but I know there's a huge world of amazing talent out there. I just want to be the best I can be, I don't need to be greater than anyone else.

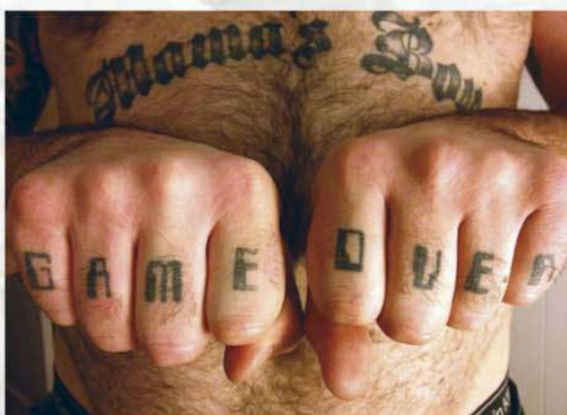
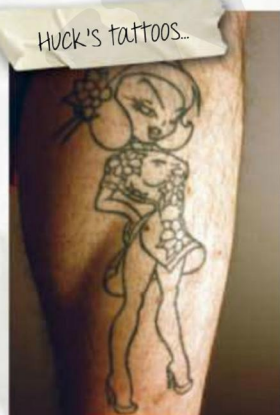
**WHAT WOULD HUCK GEE IN TOY FORM LOOK LIKE?**

Hairy 🐼

#### FRANK KOZIK

Hailing from Madrid, Spain, but calling the States home from the age of 14, Kozik is credited with reviving the lost art of concert posters. He has produced artwork for everyone from Pearl Jam to Neil Young and Sonic Youth, but since 2001 has been devoted to the vinyl art toy movement. His Smorkin' Labbit series is his best known and is to die for. Google it.

THERE'S A HUGE WORLD OF AMAZING TALENT OUT THERE. I JUST WANT TO BE THE BEST I CAN BE, I DON'T NEED TO BE GREATER THAN ANYONE ELSE





# BREAKING THE SILENCE

Tom Abbott MxM

TATTOOING AT  
**Sacred Yantra Tattoo**  
Lausanne, CH  
**Eastriver Tattoo**,  
Brooklyn, USA  
**Into You**  
London, UK

FOR OTHER  
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:mxmtat2@gmail.com

After a few years of being a graphic designer, MxM started an apprenticeship as a tattoo artist with Filip Leu which lasted for roughly three years, and has now been actively tattooing for four years. Prepare yourself for some fascinating insights into the mind of one of the most clued-in tattoo artists around...

Walking through cold Clerkenwell on a January evening, MxM starts to tell me about his life. He grew up in the French speaking side of Switzerland, in a small village near Lausanne. He went to college, then university where he studied psychology for three years, before going on to art school (ECAL, Ecole Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne) where he studied graphic design.

"I always had a broad interest in art. I did graphic design, but I was always interested in fine art and photography as well. Then I worked in publishing, because I loved the editorial context; text, language. Even in my graphic design practice, I always mainly drew inspiration from other domains."

Whilst MxM was at art school he was already getting tattooed by Filip Leu. When his studies came to an end he moved to London and that's when his interest in tattooing really took off. "I started researching into it. And I realised how many different styles there were, and how vivid and strong the culture was, especially in London. All the things I studied or explored previously started making sense among themselves. For instance, graphic design helped me in some ways, but it was just one manifestation of the way I deal with visual matters. Tattooing stems out of that vision."

"I like graphic design and I like



COMING FROM A MIDDLE-CLASS BACKGROUND, BECOMING A TATTOO ARTIST DOESN'T EXIST BASICALLY. SO I GUESS I NEEDED SOME TIME TO PROCESS THAT IN MY MIND AND THEN IT JUST HAPPENED REALLY NATURALLY

doing it as artistic expression, but I was never happy being a graphic designer as a profession. I am not good at compromising, answering a brief, second-guessing clients, bosses. I have a vision, which is the result of a long-term reaction to my environment. I need to do what I feel is right, it is

my only way of judging my own work. If I feel alienated, however good the result might be, I will be unhappy. Tattooing is the perfect balance for me, but I had to wait some time. While I was still doing my art studies, as I was getting tattooed, one day Filip said he would take me on as an



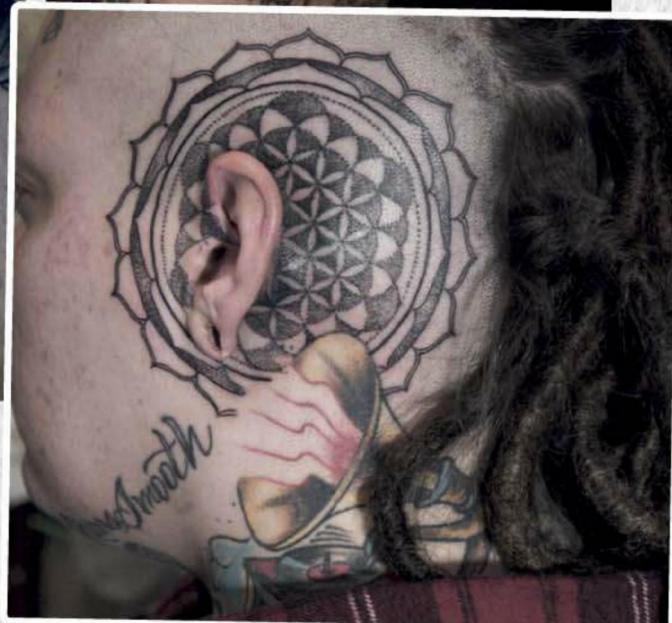
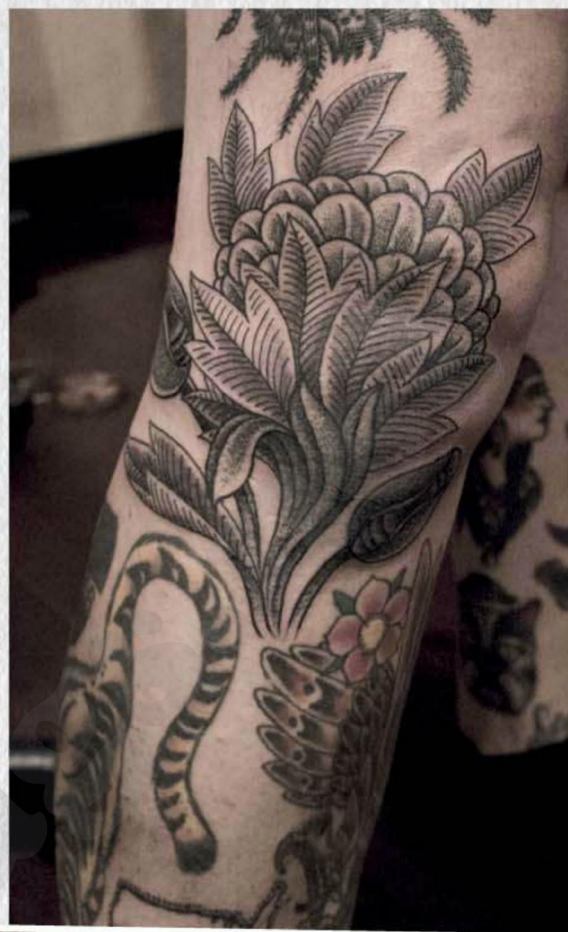


apprentice if I wanted to try. It blew me away, but I just didn't know what to do with that offer at the time".

Filip's offer was to stay on MxM's mind all the way through the rest of art school. In hindsight, MxM feels that even though he finished school, he knew that tattooing would be the thing that he'd ultimately pursue. "Coming from a middle-class background, becoming a tattoo artist doesn't exist basically. So I guess I needed some time to process that in my mind and then it just happened really naturally."

I wondered if the psychology degree

had any influence on MxM's tattooing. "In a way it did, but it was just a part of the bigger picture because I was studying all kinds of humanities anyway; anthropology, sociology, even politics. I grew up in a really political environment and social matters generally were always extremely important to me. My university years helped me to channel my thoughts, to sharpen my observation. Through anthropology, especially, I got the opportunity to approach – even superficially – the questions of tribal rituals, symbolic



exchanges and constructions. In many respects, I now actively apply these notions in tattooing. I believe tattooers have a lot in common with witchdoctors or shamans. What we do is not rational.

"Except for its occasional decorative quality, what we do has no tangible 🌟"





THROUGH ANTHROPOLOGY, ESPECIALLY, I GOT THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPROACH – EVEN SUPERFICIALLY – THE QUESTIONS OF TRIBAL RITUALS, SYMBOLIC EXCHANGES AND CONSTRUCTIONS

value except for the symbolic one that is built in the triangle customer-tattooer-social environment. Literally, what we do is harm someone, and get paid for it. There's nothing that can justify this other than a sort of mystical value. We're in a society where a lot of people, like myself, grow up agnostic, but spirituality is a basic human need that traditional Christianity doesn't really fulfil anymore. Lots of people are desperately looking for a spiritual discipline, they find it wherever they can.

"As tattooists, we deal with symbols, which is a mystical thing by definition. The ability to turn an abstract concept into a sign that sums it up, and that a group of people will share as a single signifier, is what differentiates humans from animals even more than anything else. To perpetuate, update, and create symbols is a big part of the tattooist's job. That's what makes tattooing such a powerful and universal practice."

At this point, MxM and I are entering Shoreditch. We have left Into You (where MxM is currently tattooing) far behind us. It is getting later and the cold January wind is still about. We keep walking. I ask if there were ever pieces MxM was not happy with.

"A tattoo is an encounter. It is the meeting of two people. We – like witchdoctors, psychotherapists, psychics, priests – learn to adapt to the person we have in front of us, to potentialise and optimise the quality of that encounter. Occasionally that encounter doesn't work though. It can turn into a frustrating experience, but most of the time it's good. You could be going through a tough time yourself, and not be fully available, mentally or emotionally, so obviously that would limit the exchange. Or the customer might be undecided, confused, or just mistaken. But I feel able to deal with most situations and most people, even if it means turning a person away."





"A person comes as what they are, but you must make a tattoo for what they will be. And each person will be many different people in their lifetime. The piece must please each one of those, or as many as possible. I've managed to establish a certain image for myself; the kinds of things I like and do, so that I will attract people with a certain taste, certain references, which is half of the work. Nowadays, when they get in touch, most customers have already selected you after a long process of researching the artist that matches their needs the best. It makes things a lot easier for many of us. Nevertheless, we need to maintain certain dark zones. People need to be able to project things on us. It is part of our role too. Getting a tattoo must be a very special experience. If we reveal ourselves completely, the magic is lost."

Arriving at The Diner in Shoreditch, I approach MxM's actual tattooing. "I was a kid in the '80s so I grew up liking that high-contrast graphic environment; the reds and the blacks. I'll sometimes use other colours, but for me I'm particularly interested in the structure of things. Possibly it's to

do with my Swiss upbringing, but I'm interested in what's stripped down and durable. That's why I like tribal still."

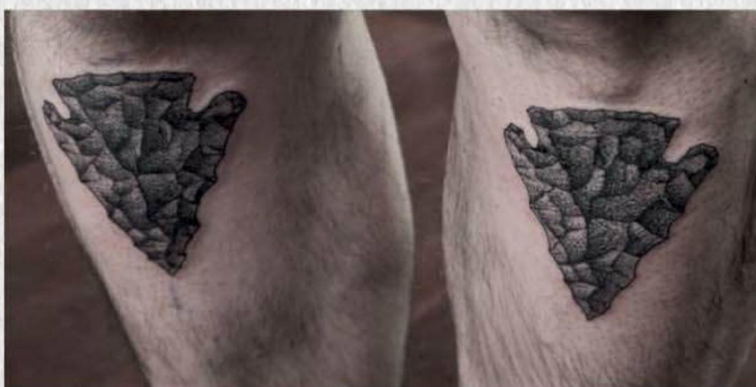
For MxM, there are some obvious references, people that he has looked up to since before he even started tattooing. He feels that he owes his style to them, but would also like to think he has his own take. In 2004/2005 when MxM had just moved to London, he discovered Thomas Hooper's work which struck something very close to him, especially for his way of integrating a wider Western art history to his tattooing practice. MxM had seen the whole Japanese/ Oriental style of tattooing when he was in Switzerland, and despite loving it, didn't feel that it was an approach he would take himself because he felt he didn't understand it, that he didn't belong to it.

Getting tattooed by Filip Leu was an amazing experience for him, and then going on to apprentice under him. Through Filip, MxM learnt a lot about how to deal with the body, how to place things, how to think of the body as a moving 3D surface; and he learnt a lot about technique too, but also about the history and culture of tattooing. Still, style-wise he really felt closer to the work of Duncan X and Hooper.

"In many ways the main influences would be Filip and Rinzing (Rinzing was Filip's apprentice before me and was working there when I became an apprentice). I consider him my tattoo-brother. They made me, deep inside. But style-wise, the Into You 🌻



A PERSON COMES AS WHAT THEY ARE. BUT YOU  
MUST MAKE A TATTOO FOR WHAT THEY WILL BE.  
AND EACH PERSON WILL BE MANY DIFFERENT  
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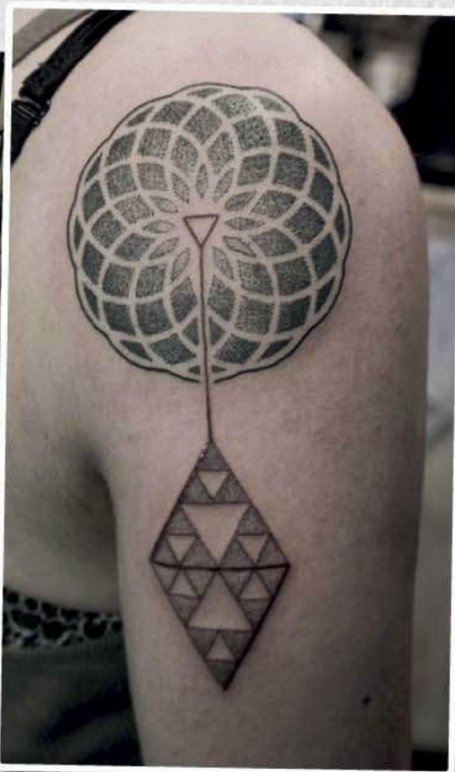






family represented something I felt a lot closer to, in terms of the tattoos that I could produce myself; so Tomas Tomas, Duncan X, Thomas Hooper who worked there, then at Frith Street before moving to New York. Jondix is another one of my main references.

"But I also like a lot of the traditional stuff. Javier Rodriguez was always someone who I admired a lot on many levels, for the absolute simplicity and strength of his work. They would be my main references. Then of course, Liam Sparkes, my other tattoo-brother; he's someone I've worked alongside a lot in the last couple of years. We've travelled, partied. The others I mentioned are my mentors, my idols. But Liam and I work on the same level. He has been tattooing for the same length of time as me; we share




As we get seated, MxM shares his final thoughts on tattooing. "I think what you observe in tattooing these days is only one effect of a much deeper shift that is going on in our society at the moment. In many ways, we are coming back to mediaeval-like schemes and structures. Reason and light are backing up, and magic and darkness are growing. Don't get me wrong, I don't think they are taking over, but hopefully balancing each

IN MANY WAYS, WE ARE COMING BACK TO MEDIAEVAL-LIKE SCHEMES AND STRUCTURES. REASON AND LIGHT ARE BACKING UP, AND MAGIC AND DARKNESS ARE GROWING. DON'T GET ME WRONG, I DON'T THINK THEY ARE TAKING OVER, BUT HOPEFULLY BALANCING EACH OTHER TO REACH A HEALTHY MIDDLE

lots of references and tastes, but we have different takes on them. Working with him helped me define myself."

MxM is also the editor of Sang Bleu, an independent arts and cultural magazine. "It is a manifestation of me, something that has helped me put things in perspective. Gather all the things I like and all my references, in a semi-coherent way. When I was a kid a lot of people would say I was scattered, so it was a way to show myself and the world, that it all somehow has a middle, a crossing, a centre point."

other to reach a healthy middle. Bodies are matter, and matter is not eternal. A body is mortal and flawed, but fun too. Body image is a locus of social pressure and tattoos are like shields against it. When you are tattooed, you are not fat or skinny anymore, small or big... you are tattooed. And what you have tattooed on you is not what mother nature made you, it is what you decide for yourself. That is also part of the reason why tattoos are so addictive. That feeling of power over nature, society. Self-determinism." 





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# Time to play the game

Known as much for his influence on the world of music as for his dress, Rickenbacker bass guitar and unabashed honesty, the man in question is so legendary, he only requires a one-word name – Lemmy

Walking backstage at Gigantour 2012 in Montreal, Canada, things were strangely quiet, like something special was about to happen. One knock on an inconspicuous door, a turn of the knob and yours truly was face to face with Ian Fraser Kilmister. Yes, Lemmy.

Rock stars are a funny business. The masters of double personalities, they often present one persona on stage and a completely different one off it. But the founding member behind legendary band, Motörhead, is always Lemmy, no matter whether he's sitting in a dressing room or delivering 'Ace of Spades' in his signature growl in front of packed stadiums.

Dressed in his all-black attire, hat included, iron cross around his neck, Marlboro in hand and Jack Daniel's close by, I was genuinely tempted to sit back and just bask in the glory that is Lemmy.

But that wouldn't make for an interesting read, so instead it was on to discussing everything from his ink to his unrivalled collection of WWII memorabilia to the launch of Motörhead drinks, all while sipping a Jack and Coke with the man who started it all...

## THE WÖRLD IS YOURS

It may have been Motörhead's 20th studio release, but *The Wörld is Yours* managed to claim top spots on radio charts and garner positive reviews throughout last year. Not bad for a band that's been around, in one line-up or another, for 35 years.

Filled with the grit, rasp and power that are synonymous with Motörhead, the only surprising thing about Wörld, was reviewers insisting on referring to the album, and band for that matter, as Lemmy's. Isn't it time Motörhead became recognized as the trio it is?

"Well, I've always tried to do that, you know. Phil's been with me 28 years, almost his entire adult life," laughs Lemmy. "But, like, I'm the singer. How many interviews have you seen with Keith Richards, right? People interview the singer, it's natural, that's the way things work. The only time it changed was with The Beatles because they all sang, so they confused the shit out of people. But it was always Lennon and McCartney, weren't it?"

Touching on everything from death to the disappointing state of the 21st century, the album is filled with stellar lyrics; one of the best comes three songs in on 'Get Back in Line': 'All things come to he who waits, but these days most things suck.'

Asked about his choice of words, Lemmy points out, "most things do suck, don't they? Music sucks these days, movies suck these days, it's all politically correct, it's all bullshit, you know. Pretending to be what we're not, pretending to be moral, pretending to be clean and all



MOST THINGS DO SUCK, DON'T THEY? MUSIC SUCKS THESE DAYS, MOVIES SUCK THESE DAYS, IT'S ALL POLITICALLY CORRECT, IT'S ALL BULLSHIT, YOU KNOW

this shit, people going into rehab because it's fashionable, it's incredible, man. It's like you go backstage and

you see 60 bottles of Perrier water and you think, there's something wrong with this, you know what I mean? There's something very wrong with this. What's more, there don't seem to be any modern-day perks to

## LEMMY ON... LOS ANGELES VS. LONDON

"A lot of people are really shortsighted about L.A., you know, there's a lot of things obviously wrong with it, but then you try and settle that London's okay, that everybody in London's cool, they're not. There's just as many assholes everywhere as there are anywhere else. It's just in L.A., they're easier to spot, you know, they're usually louder."



THE BIGGEST LOSS TODAY  
IS STUPID KIDS. THEY'RE  
NOT EDUCATED. THE  
EDUCATION SYSTEM IN  
AMERICA AND IN BRITAIN  
SUCKS. PEOPLE SHOULD  
BE TAUGHT ENGLISH  
COMPULSORY, RIGHT?





outweigh the negatives. I can't think of anything really, can you? I mean, as soon as people improve something, it's fucked. As soon as they streamline it or make it more accessible to a bigger audience, it's screwed, that's the end of it."

Taking a drag from his cigarette, Lemmy pauses and thinks of something else that's gotten worse over the years.

"The biggest loss today is stupid kids. They're not educated. The education system in America and in Britain sucks. I mean, it really fucking sucks. People should be taught English compulsory, right? But in some schools they don't teach it anymore, they teach, like, Urdu because it might come in handy one day when dealing with an ethnic minority. What the

I think. We were all drunk as c!ts. This one [the phoenix] I got in 1991, and this one [on my shoulder], the same year. It's pretty rough that one, Kat's gotta go over that one too."

As for how he and Kat crossed paths, it was all thanks to the magic of television. "I was on her show, LA Ink, I was a guest on that one, so she had to do something and I couldn't think of any new tattoos I wanted. I wasn't gonna get one just for the show. So that's when I met her and I've got to know her very well since, she's an incredible portrait tattooist. Or tattooer, is it?" he laughs, correcting himself.

Although Lemmy may not have any Mötörhead ink – "It's about time I got one" – there's no shortage of fans sporting a gamut of designs, from the

IT'S VERY STRANGE. I CAN IMAGINE THE LOGO BEING ATTRACTIVE AS A TATTOO, BUT I CAN'T SEE THE POINT OF MY FACE. IT'S LIKE HAVING YOGI BEAR ON YOUR ARM

fuck are you talking about, man? I just don't get it. We've become so smarmy, we're fucking intent on smoothing over everything with everybody all the time."

#### WARPIGS & ACES

Asked how many tattoos he has, Lemmy says "just three, I'm afraid", extending his forearms to show off his two best-known tattoos; an ace of spades with the words 'Born to Lose, Live to Win' around it on his left arm, and an Indian shield complete with phoenix, spears and feathers on his right. He then unsnaps his shirt to show off the Capricorn sign on his left shoulder.

Having blown out and faded over the years, the forearm tattoos were recently touched up and restored to glory during a stop by the LA Ink set.

"Kat Von D put the white in the feathers, it was all a dark mess. I'm gonna actually do some more stuff in here, could define those lines," he says, tracing his finger over bits of the shield. "And she made this readable for the first time in 20 years," he points to the words around the ace. "I got this one in 1979 in Amsterdam, Hanky Panky, the old master. Took him about five minutes,

infamous warpig to Lemmy's likeness.

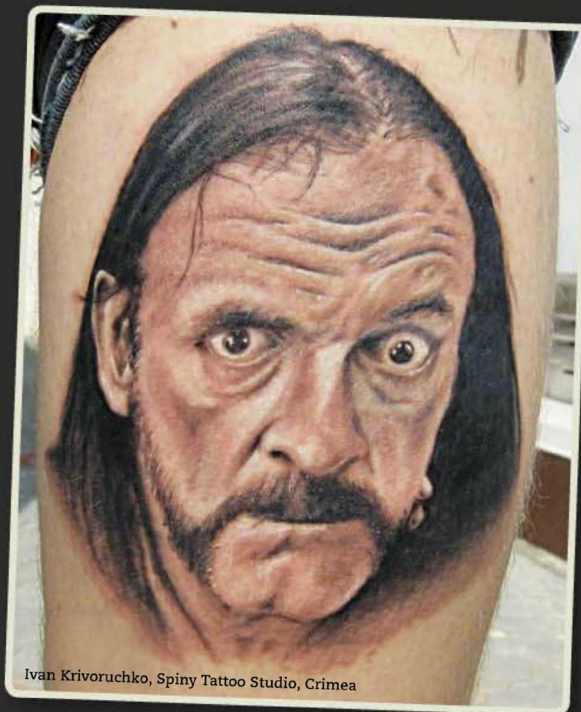
"It's very strange. I can imagine the logo being attractive as a tattoo, but I can't see the point of my face. It's like having Yogi Bear on your arm, innit? I don't know, people have their reasons. I've seen a few, I've signed a few so they can get the name tattooed on it as well, I mean, why not, you know? If they want it, it's up to them, innit? It's called freedom of choice."

Although such freedom has led to numerous portraits with remarkably little resemblance: "Oh, [I've seen] several, but you sign them anyway, like, it's a good try, you know."

Seeing guitarist, Phil Campbell, passing by, Lemmy calls him over and informs me, "you should have a look at Phil's tattoos as well, he's got a couple of good ones. I like that 'Forever' one he's got."

Showing off the Mötörhead tattoo, complete with cigarette burn, on his right bicep, then the word 'Forever' running down his left, Campbell explains, managing not to crack a smile till the very end, "it's supposed to say 'For Trevor'. When I used to be gay, I had a boyfriend called Trevor, but the guy spelled it wrong."

With wit like that, it's no wonder the guys have been able to work



Ivan Krivoruchko, Spiny Tattoo Studio, Crimea

#### LEMMY ON... RELEASING AN ALBUM OF COVERS

"We were thinking about it, yeah. It'd be fun. I don't know if people would like it or not. We've done a lot of covers in the past. We did White Line Fever, Cat Scratch Fever... we used to do Good Morning Little School Girl in an early act. All kinds of shit we did and we've recorded lots of 'em."

together for so long. A thought soon answered by Campbell's parting remark to Lemmy, "we've gotta think of some funny shit to do for the last gig, get it well planned, could be animals involved!"

Back to Lemmy's ink, will there be any additions in the future? "Maybe. I'm gonna have a tattoo of my dick on my dick, but bigger," he laughs. "Sorry 'bout that, couldn't resist it!"





*Time to  
play the  
game.*

THE MOST EXPENSIVE THINGS ARE A COUPLE OF SWORDS I'VE GOT WHICH ARE DAMASCUS STEEL BLADES... THE BEAUTY OF THEM STANDS BY ITSELF. IT'S JUST WHETHER YOU CAN SEE PAST THE BAD NEWS. IT'S HISTORY, YOU CAN'T SWEEP IT UNDER THE CARPET

#### COLLECTING MEMORABILIA, LEMMY STYLE

It wouldn't be a real Lemmy interview if his extensive and impressive collection of 'stuff', much of it hailing from WWII, wasn't touched on. A collection that started when he received an iron cross and Third Reich flag as a gift years ago.

"In those days it wasn't like 'Oh, Christ, the Nazis are coming back' because they aren't, they're gone. They're dead, right? For some time now. And those fucking groups of stupid skinheads who are banging their heads against walls and 'White power!' with the hinged arm, you know, they aren't gonna do anything. It's ludicrous to think the Nazis are coming back. The ones you wanna watch is the New Conservatives, baby. And New Labour, for that matter.

"You know they make airplane kits of the Messerschmitt 109 and there's no swastika on the tail? It was the symbol of the country for 12 years and they fought a war for six of those years, had that fucking thing

emblazoned all over everything, and yet we're pretending it didn't happen. It's great, isn't it? So as nobody will be upset. Fuck it, why shouldn't they be upset?"

A small sliver of the collection Lemmy has amassed in his Los Angeles apartment can be seen in the *Lemmy: 49% Motherfucker, 51% Son of a Bitch* documentary, which was recently certified gold.

"It's a really great collection, I'm really proud of it. The most expensive things are a couple of swords I've got which are Damascus steel blades, very beautiful. They're incredibly well made these things, engraved, etched – beautiful things. No matter what they were made for, in whatever name, that doesn't matter, the beauty of them stands by itself. It's just whether you can see past the bad news. It's history, you can't change it, you can't sweep it under the carpet, pretend it wasn't there because it was.

"There's a lot of museums I've been in that don't have as much shit as I do in a two-room apartment," he says

and, thinking about the future of all the historical items in his possession, adds, "[I'm] probably gonna leave it to my son, he's the only one I got to leave it to; and I insist that it stays together. He can do what he likes with it. He can bequeath it to some organization, but it's gotta stay together."

#### DRINKS, DRINKS, DRINKS

"That's somebody's fucking marketing idea, you know, a few more shekels for the pocket," says Lemmy when asked about the launch of Mötörhead drinks, including vodka, shiraz and rosé.

"I did taste the vodka, I didn't the shiraz because I don't drink red wine, you know. I used to drink vodka a lot at one time, so I tasted the vodka and specified that. It's Swedish, it's very good, like Absolut kind of. Nice bottle too."

But when it comes to the drink synonymous with Lemmy, Jack and Coke, could it ever be replaced? "No, not really. We gotta bring out bourbon eventually because that's what I fuckin' drink. It's hard 🍷



finding independent bourbon makers, though."

On a suggestion that he may take up bourbon making as a hobby when not on tour, Lemmy pulls a face and laughs, "it's kind of complicated, you know."

#### THE NEXT GENERATION

It can't be denied that bands from the '70s and '80s are experiencing continued popularity – just take a look at the Gigantour headliners, Mötörhead and Megadeath – while new talent seems to be fighting against a brick wall, so what gives?

"That's only because the old ones are so good. Nobody is given a chance, I don't think. There's a band from Germany called Skew Siskin who I think are fantastic. They never get a word, they can't even get signed. They've got one of the best singers in the world, girl singer, she's fucking great. And Skunk Anansie have just reformed after ten years apart."

After I admit to not being familiar with either (*shame on you, twice! Ed*), Lemmy points his finger at me, declaring, "see! It's your fault, you journalist! Ha! Hoisted by your own petard! Wrong question," he jokes, then proceeds to grab his iPad and speakers.

"Don't take any photographs of these fuckers, I look like John Lennon," he says, putting on his glasses.

As Skunk Anansie's 'Squander' fills the room, followed by Skew Siskin's 'Life's a Bitch', it's unbelievable watching Lemmy tapping his foot, strumming the air and mouthing the words until, once it's quiet again, he excitedly says, "I love that voice! Fuckin' no prisoners, you know. I was reviewing records for Kerrang! once and they had one of Skew Siskin's singles... I went to Berlin and did a song with them. I wrote some of the words for that song. It's a crime they haven't got a deal."

And in case you're wondering if he ever listens to himself, the simple answer is, "yeah, to make sure we're not fucking up."

#### WHEN I'M 97

Raised by his mother and grandmother following his parents' split when he was just three months



Jason Butcher

Andy Engel, Kitzingen

old, the women in Lemmy's life had perhaps the biggest influence of all on his outlook.

"My mother was always very take-no-prisoners, she was fearless. She brought me up and supported my gran as well, she was very cool like that and she never moaned or complained. She was working two jobs half the time."

And although his mother, the only person who still calls him Ian, is now 97, Lemmy doesn't seem keen about the prospect of such a lengthy life, nor of touring forever as only he, or perhaps Ozzy, could.

"You don't get better from 97, but it's fucking miserable being it. No, me and Ozzy won't be touring then. Maybe Bono, doggedly, hanging on. Or maybe Jagger with a Keith

THERE'S A LOT OF MUSEUMS I'VE BEEN IN THAT DON'T HAVE AS MUCH SHIT AS I DO IN A TWO-ROOM APARTMENT

Richards lookalike... the Gods are getting old."

So does Lemmy at least agree with being labeled a God? "No, God's taller. Much taller."

A witty man till the very end.

In celebration of 35 years on the road, *The World is Ours Vol. 1 – Everywhere Further than Everyplace Else* is out now and includes a DVD packed with tour footage and interviews, a double live CD and booklet documenting life on the road. 🐼

#### LEMMY ON... THE DOWNSIDE OF CROSSING INTO CANADA

"The paperwork gets a bit ominous, but the border's gotten a lot better. We used to be at the border for six hours, all bands did, it was fucking murder. They're obsessed with paperwork, but they've got a lot more commonsense nowadays."



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# TALES OF A PERPETUAL ARTIST



STUDIO  
**Unity Tattoo**  
1648 Nanaimo Street  
Vancouver, BC  
V5L 4T8  
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unitytattoo@gmail.com

From drawing comics to tattooing in the back of a hair salon to hanging with Filip Leu in Switzerland, I challenge you to find a tattooer with a more interesting tale to tell than Vancouver, Canada-based artist, Jamie Macpherson



Born in Doncaster, Macpherson spent the first seven years of his life being artistically moulded by his British surroundings and absorbing as much artsy knowledge as a young child possibly can.

"Growing up in England had a huge impact on getting into drawing comics," he says. "I used to make up my own Beano-type characters when I was about five or six years old, and my uncle would always give me his old 'Oor Wullie' comics.

"My dad was a huge influence on getting me into art young, though. He's a great illustrator and also made lots of really nice watercolor landscapes, which I loved looking at and emulated very young. As I got older, I still liked painting, but I got more into comics and superheroes through my teenage years.

My high school even let me drop math for another art course because I always just drew on the backs of my papers instead of doing the work," he laughs.

At the age of seven, Macpherson moved across the Atlantic, settling in British Columbia, Canada. Several years later, when 1999 came around, Macpherson found himself walking into The Twilight Zone – "A little shop in the back of a hair salon run by

bikers" – at 19 in Chilliwack, BC. That was it. He didn't need any further explanations or time for thought, he was hooked.

"I saw some Paul Booth flash and spent hours flipping through tattoo magazines in the shop," he remembers. "I started bringing my best drawings and comics in to show the tattooists at the shop... the owner really liked my drawings and paid me \$20 to draw

I WAS NERVOUS FOR SURE BECAUSE I DIDN'T LIKE THE IDEA THAT I WAS HURTING PEOPLE. I WAS SWEATING BULLETS FOR MY FIRST FEW TATTOOS, BUT I REALLY LEARNED A LOT FROM THEM

for the customers on the spot, then they would tattoo them. I would watch very closely as my artwork got etched into the skin, asking so many questions constantly. Then they got me to

clean tubes, do the floors, bring them coffee and they taught me how to build needles. Eventually, I got to tattoo one of the artists working at the shop – a dragon head on the top of the foot. They got me to outline it with a single needle and fill it in with a five round."

Constantly looking through tattoo magazines, committed to expanding his tattoo knowledge, Macpherson repeatedly came across stories about



Barbara Pavone © Jamie Macpherson





tattoo artists jumping from country to country to improve their skills. That's when the travel bug decided to strike, hard. Deciding that exploring and conquering at least part of the world's large expanse was to be his next step, Macpherson was soon on the road.

"I did a four-month tattoo tour, starting in England, then I tattooed in Glasgow for a month with Johnny's Tattoo Studio," he starts, recounting the almost mind-numbingly packed journey, complete with an intimate encounter of a tattoo legend.

"After Scotland, I went to Switzerland

and met my favorite artist, Filip Leu, who I'd been following for years in all the magazines. When I got to Lausanne, both he and Rinzing were very welcoming, made me a coffee and made me feel at home. Most of the customers were tattooists themselves, so it was great to meet them all. Filip let me watch him very closely for the few days I was there and had lots of great tips on technique. I think the best advice he gave me was to draw more and go back to art basics, re-learn everything I thought I already knew to push my work further. Immediately

FILIP LET ME WATCH HIM VERY CLOSELY FOR THE FEW DAYS I WAS THERE AND HAD LOTS OF GREAT TIPS ON TECHNIQUE. I THINK THE BEST ADVICE HE GAVE ME WAS TO DRAW MORE AND GO BACK TO ART BASICS

that night I started a new sketchbook, which I filled completely and have been drawing almost constantly ever since. He really got me more excited about tattooing and art in general."

With some new art from Rinzing on his skin, Macpherson's journey continued to Italy and then Portugal, "where I tattooed in Cais Cais at a really nice shop called Urban Gallery. Then I came home!"

No matter where he set foot, one particular style of tattooing seemed to always be met with the same great awe and respect, regardless of culture. "I noticed a lot of people all over showing an interest in Japanese stuff. It really just flows so nice, fits the body and is easy to read. Also, it holds up over time really nicely."

Which may be why, apart from his bold old school designs, Macpherson



loves tackling large-scale Japanese works, paying tribute and doing great justice to the historic, instantly recognizable style. Although, he does always strive to add his own touch and weave in his background.

"I try to put a European twist on my work. It shares a lot of the same elements as a well-drawn comic book. Nice, flowing lines, like with a brush, give so much movement and life to a design."

And just because all the travelling

and tattooing aren't nearly enough, he also refuses to cease pursuing his passions for painting, drawing and music, continuously fusing artistic elements and blurring the lines between varied mediums.

"I truly believe that all art forms feed each other in one way or another," he says. "I think it's important to explore lots of different mediums and apply techniques from one medium to another. For example, a flat paintbrush on paper can give

you a similar effect as a magnum tattoo needle on skin and vice versa. Painting like you're tattooing or tattooing like you're painting.

"I think a solid tattoo is the same as a solid drawing or painting. It should be a balanced composition, have a clear focal point that the eye is drawn towards and shouldn't be too cluttered."

As for his current artistic obsession? "I've been trying to get a better understanding of brushstrokes,



#### GUESTING AT JOHNNY'S TATTOO STUDIO

Johnny's a super great guy from the old school generation of tattooists. In fact, there was a time when he was one of only two shops in Glasgow. My friend Illsynapse, from Nagoya, Japan, also came down to meet up with me and tattoo. He's always teaching me so much about Japanese tattoo motifs and names of different yokai (Japanese ghosts) and stuff like that. He loved the haggis in Scotland! [laughs]

IT'S A GOOD FEELING TO BE INSPIRED BY A CHANGE OF SCENERY. I TRY TO LEARN FROM THAT AND DO AS MANY STYLES AND TRIBUTES TO CLASSICS AS I CAN, TO KEEP IT INTERESTING FOR MYSELF, BUT ALSO JUST TO SHOW THAT I DID MY HOMEWORK





so I've been studying Chinese ink paintings on rice paper. You have to work very quickly because the paper absorbs the ink so quickly. I'm really interested in the simple gesture strokes they use in scroll painting, like four brushstrokes and you see a perfect horse running or a tiger. It takes years to master, but when it's mastered, a painting like that could take five minutes to paint and it's perfect!" For anyone who thinks this is all surely more than enough for one person to have on their plate, Macpherson is out to prove you wrong, as he is also the shop manager of Vancouver, Canada's, brand spankin' new Unity Tattoo.

"My good friend Yu-Wei Wang opened up shop in February of 2011. I'm lucky enough to have lots of

friends in the industry who work with me, which makes it more enjoyable too. Illsynapse comes every year from Japan, Sylvie from Montreal, and our newest edition, Kyle Harding, works with me full-time now," he says.

"I really enjoy managing a shop without being the owner. I always say, I don't want to have to be a boss, so don't make me be a boss. We're a drama-free shop, not a TV reality show, so everyone respects that." Probably why Unity Tattoo's inaugural year has proved to be smooth sailing and why the shop's reputation and success is quickly piling up in proportion with the talent of the variety of artists, both local and international, that it houses.

With travel still on the agenda and guest spots and conventions likely to be a part of Macpherson's yearly calendar for years to come, the young artist doesn't try and fight off the travel itch, but does limit his ventures away from home to no more than a week, considering his family and new baby girl, Aya. Which I suppose also means his back-up career choice – "I've been in punk bands and electronic projects, so I guess I'd be a touring musician" – would probably not have the greatest success.

What I absolutely

had to know next was, as far as the newest generation Macpherson's first tattoo is concerned, does Aya have her artist already picked out for her by default?

"I won't let her get tattooed by a scratcher from home, that's for sure!" laughs Macpherson. "Also, when she's old enough, she'll be tattooing me!"

With so many accomplishments, both in his personal life and ever-growing career, since his humble beginnings in the tattoo world in 1999, all that's left to be addressed by Macpherson is the issue of what

I REALLY ENJOY MANAGING A SHOP WITHOUT BEING THE OWNER. I ALWAYS SAY, I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO BE A BOSS, SO DON'T MAKE ME BE A BOSS. WE'RE A DRAMA-FREE SHOP, NOT A TV REALITY SHOW, SO EVERYONE RESPECTS THAT



can possibly be expected from him next. What does Jamie Macpherson have hiding up his very long and very impressive sleeve?

"I completed a series of 100 thumbnails of backpieces last year and am constantly working on improving my technique, not just in tattooing, but drawing and painting, and studying books on rules of composition, color theory and advanced perspective drawing. I plan on publishing designs from various sketchbooks in the future."

Needless to say, sleep is optional when you're a perpetual artist. 🐼



# Tattoo FREEZE

January 15th • Telford International

## THE BIG CHILL

Despite predictions to the contrary, the weather was extremely kind to Tattoo Freeze. Nobody got banged up on the roads... in fact, so far as a winter convention goes, it was pretty damn seamless



It all began with two polar opposites on the Saturday evening. You always have it in your head that maybe everything will be ready to roll and you'll be able to hit the bar early, but it never quite works out like that. A few hours in, I find Mark Poole setting up a 'device' – a device that has people talking all weekend. With a rig that's been wired into a perfectly designed steampunk clock, it sure looks the part and does the job of stopping people in their tracks. Nice work.

Meantime, not 100 feet away, John Anderton has knocked himself up a battery-powered rig just for laughs. Not even something as obvious like a car battery, but a little nine-volt square stuck on with tape. It's at this point I figured it was going to be a pretty fun show come the open doors.

This year, the show has been cut down to a single day and I have to be honest, it's all the better for it – the line of people outside the door is in total agreement. Intense, extremely busy and a whole load of fun for everybody, maybe this is what the world needs to get the year off to a good start.

Seeing what Xoilo has set out for himself in the coming hours is always a great place to begin – and today he has a huge custom piece. I know before he even begins that he will still be putting finishing touches to this piece long after everybody else has started to pack away; and sure enough, come the end of the day, he's still ploughing in the perfectionist's finishing touches that make him the cutting edge artist that he is. It looks painful, but beautiful and worth every final stroke that's put into it. Mark my words – one day his name will be spoken in the same hushed tones as Yann Black as a major influence on



INTENSE, EXTREMELY BUSY AND A WHOLE LOAD OF FUN FOR EVERYBODY. MAYBE THIS IS WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS TO GET THE YEAR OFF TO A GOOD START.



### THE WINNERS

**Best of Convention**  
Chantale Coady,  
Electric Vintage

**Best Small Black & Grey**  
Anabi, Anabi Tattoo

**Best Large Colour**  
Phatt German,  
No Regrets

**Best Small Colour**  
Carl Zambra, Bodyart

**Best Back Piece**  
Daniel Watson,  
Vida Loca

**Best Large Black & Grey**  
Ronnie Goddard, Blood  
Sweat & Pain

**Best Portrait**  
Kat Wilson, Happy Sailor

**Best Tribal/Celtic**  
Mark Frost, Simlink

**Best Oriental**  
Daniel Watson,  
Vida Loca

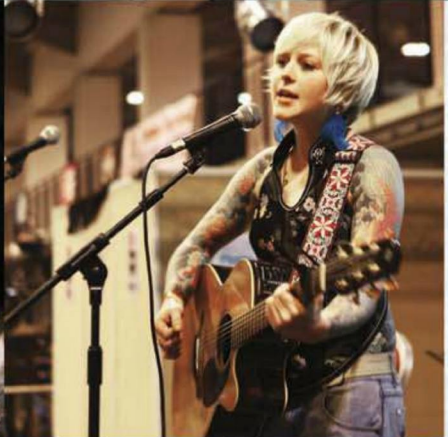
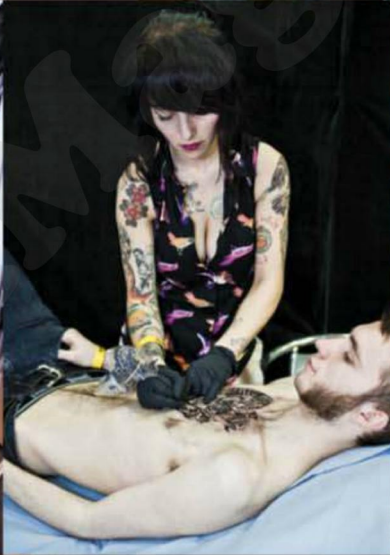
dozens upon dozens of artists in years to come...

There are many repeat offenders here this year as well – Tattoo Freeze is really starting to cement itself as a staple in the diary for both artists and fans. On this repeat offender list, we have Kat and Taco from Happy Sailor in Blackpool, who after putting in some serious hours into setting up a great little studio, are really starting to make a name for themselves on the circuit. It's also great to see ABH again – those guys must prop up most of the conventions in the UK right now.

It's also always a pleasure to see people work so hard that you never get a chance to speak with them. Most notable under this banner are Jo and Rachel (Modern Body Art), who, every time I walked past, had their heads down as far as I could see for the entire day. Or maybe they just saw me coming...

Meanwhile, in the background, 🍷











those Roller Girls took to the arena again. I can't say I understand the rules any better than I did last year, but man, it's incredibly good fun to watch. I think the key is to stand there for a long period of time and let it sink into you by osmosis – either that or get a pair of skates on.

Ice sculpting is not normally top of my list to stand around and watch, but again, the guys at Glacial Art prove that when you actually see something being created in the flesh – so to speak – your opinions can be changed quite dramatically as you marvel at exactly how great art is created.

And I think that brings us pretty much full circle. There's a lot of fans here this year for whom it's their first time at the show – any show come to that – and this is what conventions do best. Providing a wide open forum for people to engage, or not engage if they prefer – is priceless when it comes to pushing tattoo forwards as



**NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS**  
First Place: Dolly Rockits – "that's the way we do it"

PROVIDING A WIDE OPEN FORUM FOR PEOPLE TO ENGAGE, OR NOT ENGAGE IF THEY PREFER – IS PRICELESS WHEN IT COMES TO PUSHING TATTOO FORWARDS AS AN ARTFORM

an artform. Of note this year – and frowned upon by some (self included originally) was the addition of the VW Camper trade area. Whilst the traders themselves held no interest to me personally, what it did provide was a great environment for those who were mildly interested in tattoo to filter across into the main arena to see what it was all about.

Suffice to say, there were more than a few people towards the end of the day sporting a cling-film wrap as well as sexy additions for their buses – and that can only be a good thing. Thus, I stand corrected.

One of the things I do understand in the peripherals around here though is music. Such is the nature of working a show that you never get to see all the things you wanted to, but in the run up to the show, I became quite enthralled by Jemma Krysa's YouTube uploads. That was one aspect I wasn't going to miss out on. If you're a fan of acoustic music, you're missing out on a real treat if you've been neglecting Jemma. As luck and technology would have it, you can rectify that right here,

right now: [www.jemmakrysa.com](http://www.jemmakrysa.com). In the coming years, I for one (and I'm not alone) would welcome more acoustic-based music at all conventions. The show is after all about the art, but to be able to opt in/ opt out of acoustic performances is genius – and hellfire, there's some serious talent kicking around this country if you care to look.

Finally, it was nothing but a pleasure to see Chantale Coady walk away with the Best of Convention award for her Pan's *Labyrinth* depiction. It's not been so long since she decided to go it alone, and winning was testament to how long and hard she has worked – besides which, it was damn fine piece in the flesh – hopefully the photograph does it justice. For what (always) seems like an eternity on the judging stage, we came up with nine great winners. Not to take anything away from those winners, but it will always be a Highlander's shame that there 'can be only one', when there's so much good work to choose from. Check out the box copy for the official results. 🐾







# AM-JAM

## 27-29 JANUARY

### HOLIDAY INN CONVENTION CENTRE

# SYRACUSE

To be honest, there aren't a lot of tattoo conventions that continue to capture my attention after a few years, but one in particular tends to call me back with it's siren song year after year



Nicoletto

Don't get me wrong, but upstate New York is a beautiful winter wonderland (yep – sarcasm). But in all honesty the AM-JAM Tattoo Expo can be a beaming light, casting a warm glow to help sooth the winter doldrums here.

This year's event marks the 26th year since the AM-JAM family first brought some excitement to the citizens of New York and beyond. As a tattoo expo, this has a lineage that can make most conventions show their green-eyed jealousy. With the likes of Paul Booth, Shotsy Gorman, Stephen Lanphear, Jack Rudy, and Jonathan Shaw making appearances in the past, this show has been one

that catches the interest of anyone following the tattoo circuit.

Like most shows, AM-JAM has had its share of growing pains and yet somehow continues to evolve. Battling changing venues, a new city and a change in promoters, it continues to grow and get just a little better every year. In the old days it was held in a cold National Guard armory building in Schenectady, NY, but after 2001 (because of security) they decided to move it to a bigger city – Syracuse. After 26 years of bringing the public some of the best tattoo work and entertainment to be found in the

upstate area, AM-JAM continues to set new standards, not just for itself, but also the tattoo art community in general. Wow... 26 years. I guess that also makes this one of the longest running conventions in America.

Jean Aldous, the current show promoter, is someone who's really in tune with what the artists and convention goers' needs are. She



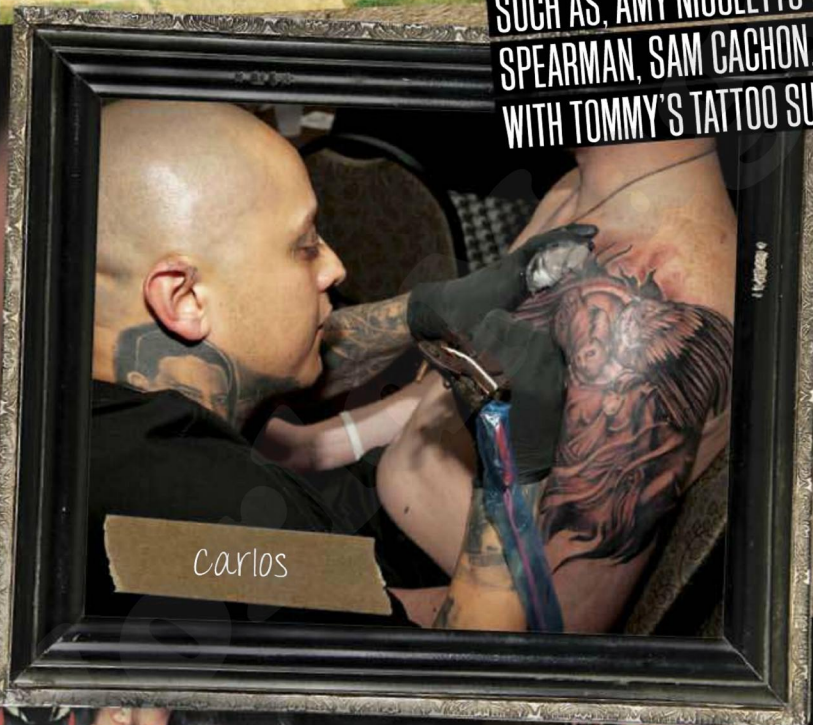




saldano



**AM JAM CONTINUES TO ATTRACT SUCH TATTOO LUMINARIES SUCH AS, AMY NICOLETTO FROM THE TV SERIES, LA INK, PHILLIP SPEARMAN, SAM CACHON, PAYNE (WORKING IN CONJUNCTION WITH TOMMY'S TATTOO SUPPLY AS THEIR RESIDENT ARTIST)**



carlos



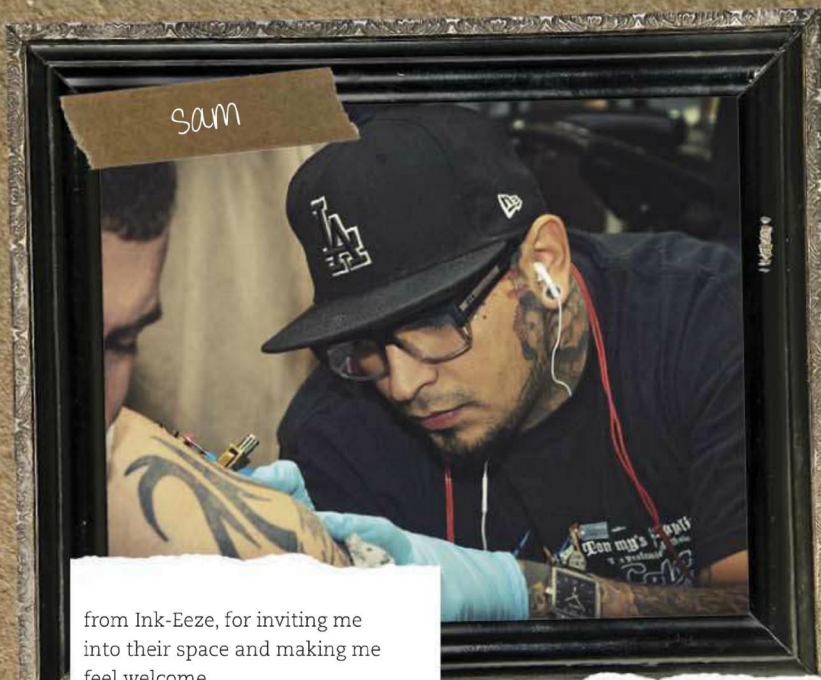
and her staff seem to have their fingers on the pulse to know what people want and need from a show. And always open to new ideas, Jean has been the driving force that has managed to keep this show alive and flourishing in a world full of cookie-cutter conventions.

Even after all these years, AM-JAM continues to attract such tattoo luminaries such as, Amy Nicoletto from the TV series, *LA Ink*, Phillip Spearman, Sam Cachon, Payne (working in conjunction with Tommy's Tattoo Supply as their resident artist) – the list goes on, but I only have so many words to work with here.

After admitting to Amy Nicoletto that I'm not a regular viewer of the show and I actually know her more from her tattoo work, she forgave me and allowed me the privilege to come into the booth and photograph her and the rocking portrait she was doing. Being a well-rounded tattoo artist, I do have to say that Amy's portraiture work is definitely a strong point; I can't wait to see more of the new stuff that will be coming down the pike from this lovely lady. I do have to give special thanks, not just to her, but to Michael, the man 🙌



sam



from Ink-Eeze, for inviting me into their space and making me feel welcome.

Knowing Phillip Spearman for as long as I have and having the honor of photographing him many times, it wasn't that hard sneaking into his booth and spending a little time talking and photographing one of the coolest people in the tattoo community. What made this even more special was that he was halfway through an all-day dragon sitting, which made for a fantastic photo op. Phil has to be one of the coolest, most laid-back people one can come across out on the floor at a convention; even with all the hustle and bustle going on around him, he always has time to answer a few questions or pop his head up to give the crowd gathered around his booth a quick smile.

**SAM'S STYLE IS AN AMAZING BLEND OF L.A. FINE LINE  
MELDED PERFECTLY WITH A CLASSIC AMERICAN FLAIR,  
MAKING HIM SOMEONE TO KEEP AN EYE ON FOR THE FUTURE**

Sam Cachon managed to make the trip to Syracuse from sunny southern California to be part of the show this year. That must say something considering that where he left, the temperature was in the 80s and sunny, while here, it's in the 30s and cloudy with occasional snow. It just goes to show the dedication some have to this convention. Sam's style is an amazing blend of L.A. fine line

melled perfectly with a classic American flair, making him someone to keep an eye on for the future. It's also a great thing he didn't come alone; Sam brought another amazing artist from California, named Carlos, who works out of Cryptic Tattoo.

Carlos was cranking out tattoos like a mad man on a mission; his work was top shelf and was whipped out at such blazing speeds, that I actually thought I was away from his booth for far longer than I actually was. Sam and Carlos' booths being right next to each other made it one of the coolest spots to be at this show. And everyone working those booths were not only extremely talented, but some of the funniest and nicest people at the show – Carlos and his frontman, Junior, are



Milton



ski

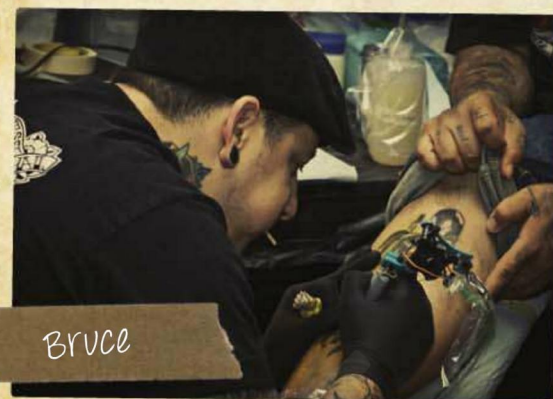


erik





Phil



Bruce

another two we should be keeping an eye on, so much so that I'm even going to drop a link to his site here... [www.cryptic-tattoo.com](http://www.cryptic-tattoo.com).

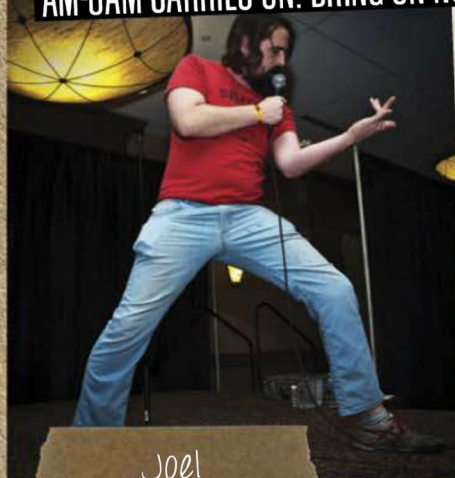
Another person worth mentioning is the man they call, Payne – the resident tattoo artist for Tommy's Tattoo Supply. A great artist in his own right and an all-round nice guy. He was putting out some great portrait work this weekend making the artists around him a little envious of his talent.

Seeing as I just opened a new studio in Boston, I wasn't going to go to this show: money, time and distance all being a factor, but Jean and the whole AM-JAM family weren't having any of that. I'm glad I went, especially considering I've only missed one of the last 20 years of this convention. I got the chance to see some old friends and to meet some new ones. AM-JAM has always been a kind of oasis in the dead of winter bringing artists from all over to show what they can do.

Sure this show has a reputation of being a gritty, no frills wild west type of tattoo convention, but it's also a no bullshit, down to business show, that can leave the uninitiated



THROUGH ALL THE GROWING PAINS AND PROBLEMS THAT IMPACT MOST CONVENTIONS, AM-JAM CARRIES ON. BRING ON NUMBER 27

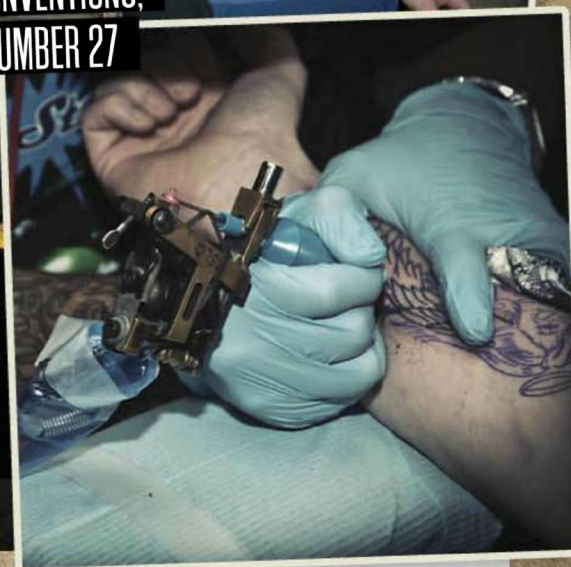


Joel



person's head spinning. With some great artists (both up-and-coming and well-known) making the scene, along with entertainment from the Lizardman and his partner-in-crime, comedian Joel Dixon Keith, this show has proven that it's the little show that can. Through all the growing pains and problems that impact most conventions, AM-JAM carries on. Bring on number 27.

Until then, cheers from the colonies my friends... 🐸





# Classifieds

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**Ritual Art Tattoo in Rainham**, Kent is looking for a secretary/ studio assistant. Must have admin experience, be self-confident, outgoing and interested in tattoos. Please email Lizi for more info and the job specifics: ritualarttattoo@me.com.

**I am a Doncaster based tattooist** looking for work in a studio in Doncaster/South Yorkshire. I'm a reliable, self-motivated individual. I can do custom work and enjoy doing all aspects of tattooing, including black and grey portraits. I'm dedicated and hard-working with no drink or drug issues. If you're interested and want to see my portfolio, please email: dazblakeley@hotmail.co.uk.

**Full-time artist required** for a very busy shop in London that's been established over 35 years to take over a full custom diary. Needs to be strong all round, but especially black and grey. tattoocentre@btconnect.com.

**Due to high demand**, True Love Tattoos is looking for an experienced tattooist. Three days a week being offered to start with. An impressive portfolio and good attitude towards customers is essential. If this is you, email us at: mandie.barber@hotmail.com.

**Portside tattoo** is looking for a tattooist for our studio in north Liverpool. Ideally you will have at least two years experience, although all portfolios will be reviewed. Please no smackheads, drunks or emotionally twisted individuals (sickos we can handle). Guest spot applications also welcome. Pay and hours are negotiable. Email Scott on: Portside2@mail.com, or Tel 07758 877314.

**Full-time tattoo artist position** at Art 'n' Soul Tattoo Studio, Manchester. Art 'n' Soul is a modern, friendly and hygienic tattoo studio just outside Manchester city centre. Situated on one of the main roads in and out of Manchester, we are looking for a talented, hard-working, stylish and experienced tattoo artist who wants a bit of city life. If you are interested, send your portfolio or link to your work to: info@artnsoultattoo.co.uk, or call us on 0161 223 5968. Website: www.

artnsoultattoo.co.uk, Facebook: Seach Jam Tat, Twitter: @artnsoultat.

**Flaming Gun Tattoo Studio** are looking for another artist to join our team. We are a well established and very busy, hard-working studio. We cover all aspects of tattooing and our work is custom based, so a good all rounder is preferred but not essential. Minimum of two years shop experience. Please have portfolio available for the interview. Email us at: flamingguntattoo@aol.com with a covering letter and a few photos of recent work. Telephone 01206 575705.

**InKarma Southport** are looking for a talented, dedicated tattoo artist to join them on a full-time basis. Will consider part-time also. Studio experience is essential. A strong portfolio and excellent work ethic is a must. References will be required. Short term relocation help is available. If interested please email relevant information and images of your work to: inkarma@hotmail.co.uk.

**T777 TOO AND T77 TOO:** number plates for sale. I am putting them up for sale at the value of £3,000 each or £5,500 the pair, but am open to very sensible offers. If you would like any further information regarding these please contact Stu on 07773131157.

**Ravens Nest** in Gravesend Kent is expanding! We are looking for additional tattooists to join us asap. The work is piling up! So if you are competent at art, reliable, nice and a good tattooist, then get in touch. If you can produce a good work portfolio and not have any diva tendencies, drop me a line. We are very, very busy and need the help! tattoo@ravens-nest.co.uk or telephone: 01474333282.

**Broad Street Studio** in Bath are looking for an apprentice. Anyone interested please email a covering letter telling us a bit about yourself and your portfolio to: info@broadstreetstudio.co.uk or call the studio on 01225 329825.

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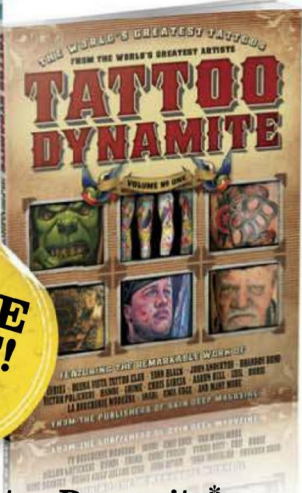
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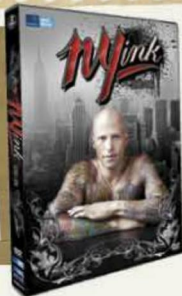
# Letters

## AIR YOUR VIEWS OR HAVE A RANT!

AND WE'LL GIVE ONE LETTER A FREE, YES FREE, T-SHIRT! AREN'T WE NICE? (SO DON'T FORGET TO PUT YOUR SIZE ON YOUR LETTER OR WE'LL HAVE TO GUESS)

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Letter  
of The  
Month



## A valid rant

We feel that we need to write this letter not only to voice our own, and many other peoples opinion, but also to vent some pent up pissed off-ness from our system. We are talking about the growing number of underaged teenies who are plastering themselves with tattoos. It doesn't help that Annual Televised Talent Shows have next generation Amy Winehouse and Justin Beibers prancing around the stage displaying a collection of illegal ink, when they're barely out of high school. It was only a few months ago that a guy came into our studio enquiring about a tattoo for his daughter, as she has been on and on at him to let her have one. When asked how old she was, He replied, "Oh, she's 12... but a grown up 12." We really couldn't believe what had just fell out of his mouth. The most worrying thing was that, because we refused and told him the whole "Tattooing of Minors Act... etc." he was quite happy to go and find someone who "WILL" tattoo her, just to stop her moaning. More worrying still, is that there are more and more people buying cheap tattooing equipment off the internet and butchering

people from the comfort of their own kitchens. Finally, we have found that there has been a sudden surge in young lads insisting on full-on neck and throat tattoos for their first ink. After we tell them that we don't tattoo above the neck or below the wrist, we ask them what they do for a job. Nine times out of ten they reply, "I'm in Uni..." They just don't get the fact that it's going to be with them for the rest of their lives, but they would quite like one there because their favourite band have them. Jesus!

Anyhow... rant over. Thanks for providing us with a great mag from month to month.

Stuart Jason Lee  
& Andy Ward

*Thanks for the mail. There's no accounting for people out there - it's what makes the world go around. Standing your own moral ground is all you can do though - and for what it's worth, I agree. There's a time and a place for hands and necks - like when there's no room left anywhere else, but then I can be a little bit old school like that. The teenie thing is just plain dumb though, I'm not sure which is worse - finding somebody that would actually do it, or the old man for letting her. That conversation stops at the words "Dad, can I..." in our house, whatever the subject matter!*

## I want my heavy metal!

Having just read your terrific editorial for the December issue of Skin Deep, I just wanted to let you know I couldn't agree more with you! The whole 'rockabilly'/'50s/'60s thing is a great look, etc., but why is it the ONLY prevalent 'image' seen (and even heard) at most tattoo conventions? I am a huge fan of tattoos, but I have to say the music I've heard at the conventions I've been to just leaves me cold. How about the organisers including a bit of variety in the music every now and then? Play some rock/metal/ alt stuff maybe? Not all day or anything, just... some of the day? I mean, the London Tattoo Convention is a perfect example. Next year's main band is Vince and the Boneshakers... isn't that three years in a row now? There are literally hundreds of



@Johnwmarrs  
"day off work so best grab my @skindeepmag and do very Little all day. Sounds good to me"

@Suzy\_quatro  
"brew and @skindeepmag. Perfect saturday combo"

@Trezevtron "oh yeah!! Found my limited edition @skindeepmag cover in South dublin! :D #sdcoverhunt"

@Rog\_w "@skindeepmag just ordered tattoos and tentacles. Looks Awesome, a bit of a collector's piece. Hope it arrives quickly!"

@Yorkshirebevan "@skindeepmag i misread that last tweet as a feature Called "tattoos and testicles". Got slightly worried then."

@Pspiercing " @skindeepmag now when can i be on the cover? :)"

@Liam\_wiseman "i need to go asda i want @skindeepmag ! Like now"

@Msemab "ooooohhhh-hhhh. F\*cking loving the cover of this months @SkindEEPmag absolutely flippin' fabulous :) "big grin"

other bands that would LOVE the opportunity to play somewhere like a tattoo convention!

Ok, rant over... I'm gonna go put some Slipknot on :-P

## Melanie, Belfast

*What is this? 'Letters from people called Melanie' month? Hearing you live, loud and clear though...*

## Addicted to pain

I've read the article in issue 206 regarding the Dr Numb numbing cream. I personally feel that there is nothing like feeling the needle pulsating through your skin as you are being tattooed. Regardless of the pain, it's the outcome of the tattoo that should subside the pain. Feeling the pain is part of the hype in getting a tattoo. I think this cream is for babies, I am a 25-year-old, of slim build, and I've now got 19 tattoos and I've had no numbing cream. I have sat there and taken it all in my stride. No pain, no gain I say. The pain is what makes me want to go back for more, it's like a very addictive drug. I for one won't be interested in getting any of this cream and if offered for free I would rather give it away than use it as I don't mind the pain.

## Melanie

*I agree, though I wouldn't go so far as use the drug analogy myself... and are you really sure the pain is what makes you go back for more? Surely the art, has to be the art - otherwise you might as well just stick pins in your hand and save yourself a ton of cash! I get your drift though...*





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## WELCOME TO THE DOLLS HOUSE

When I was about eight years old I collected novelty erasers, my older sister collected pig-related paraphernalia, and we both owned perfectly scaled dollhouses that were immaculately and extensively furnished



Paula Hardy Kangelos

I don't believe the desire for these matching multiples started with us, but rather, they were impressed upon us by well-meaning great aunts and toy shop-weary parents. Easier than imagining original gifts, assorted distant familials added to, expanded, and extended our collection, and the novelty amassments grew like weeds without any real effort on our part. Perhaps there is complex law known only to physicists that explains the gravitation of like-objects to each other or perhaps the truth is more simple, but the fact remains that one stuffed pig toy begat another, and the same applies to other collections. People will and do collect almost anything, be that stamps, matchboxes, or indeed, tattoos.

As a parent and regular member of society I often meet new people, people unfamiliar with alternative culture; curious folk, folk who approach my noticeably tattooed self with familiar questions. Often the questions asked are ones that the questioners hope they already have answers to. Thus I am asked if I have so many tattoos because I have become addicted to the process. Whilst this assumption provides a simple explanation for pursuing an activity incomprehensible to many, I don't believe it to be so. I don't believe I'm an addict and I don't believe I have an addiction... I think I have a collection.

To collect, to accumulate and gather together is well-recognised human behaviour, observed in myriad

places across millennia. Collecting is such an ingrained part of the human experience that it appears in almost all video games, magazines, etc. – it's so common, that we are barely aware of it. The practice of tattooing is just as old and widespread, and almost as common, but these phenomena combined are more recent, being of the 20th century. The tattoo collection is a modern luxury, popularised via specialist media and the Internet.

Like my long discarded rubbers shaped to resemble records and roller-skates, I didn't set out with an

COLLECTING IS A MULTI-FACETED AND COMPLEX ACTIVITY, BUT THE ONE THING ALL COLLECTIONS HAVE IN COMMON... A SENSE OF STILLNESS

end point in mind, I didn't plan on a whole shoebox full of perfumed erasers, just like I didn't intend to become extensively tattooed. Rather, I had one tattoo, shortly followed by another and somewhere along the path my two tattoos became many. I had found an altogether more grown up thing to collect, and like rubbers, this collection gathered pace much like an accumulating snowball.

So why do we collect? Some collect in order to study or preserve history, but the tattoo collector cannot accumulate for historical reasons, unless the concept can be extended to include the saving of mementoes from the history of the self.

Collecting can be an attempt to catalogue and order the seemingly in-orderable. It can be a quest, a life-long pursuit that can never be completed, or it can be a way to connect oneself with a seemingly unreachable

passion or people. Collecting can ease insecurity and fill voids. It can be motivated by the thrill of the hunt or by competitive spirit. It is a multi-faceted and complex activity, but the one thing all collections have in common... a sense of stillness.

As with museums, placing something within a collection is an attempt at preserving it, holding it in place for evermore, like pressing a flower. We may offer these treasured things up for inspection and invite new discovery or known contemplation. Any kind of acquisitive pastime involves an element of consumerism and tattoos are no different. To be a

tattoo collector you must also be a tattoo customer, but unlike those who routinely purchase certain kinds of objects, we can not be motivated by investment, after all, we cannot speculate nor profit, our purchases will always be ours alone; they end the process of buying and selling, rather than follow its usual cyclical path.

For the tattoo collector, the body is the cabinet where we put our prized tattoos on display for everyone to see, and thus our collections help to define us to others. Our collections are portable and indelible; we take them with us everywhere we go.

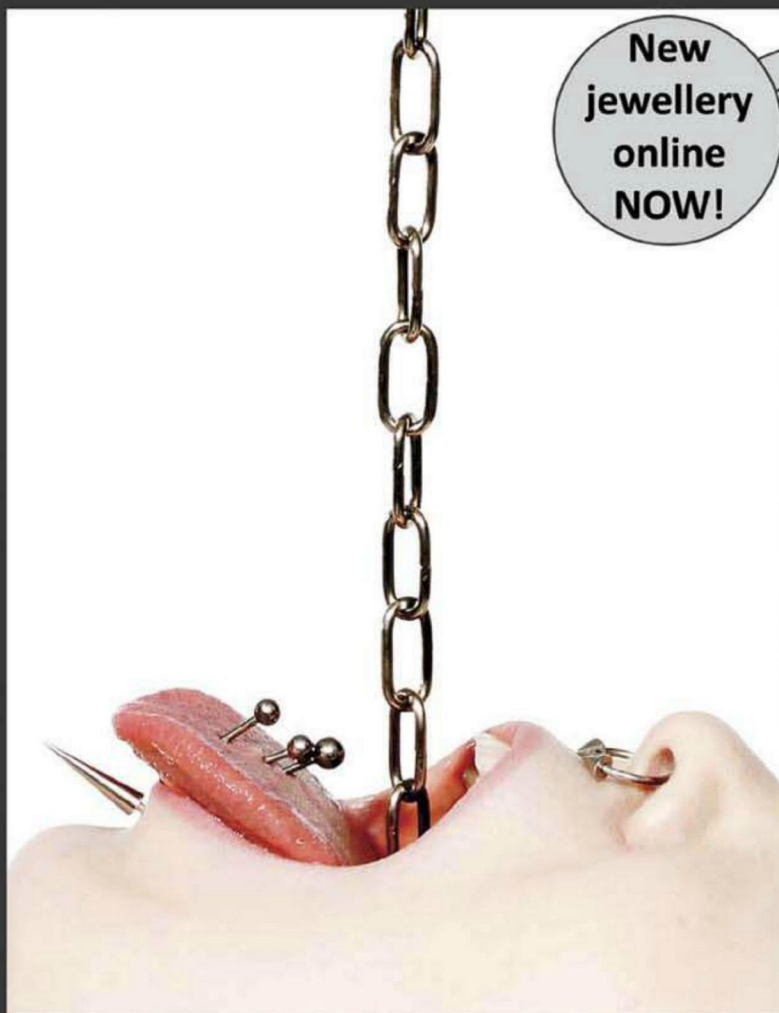
And those wonderfully furnished dolls houses? They predicted the future. My sister's was immaculate, and was later sold on to a toy shop. Mine... used, a little bit broken and covered in 'Save Worzel Gummidge' stickers, was mine forever. 🐾





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